### Ing Impossible Mrs. Bellew

David Liste

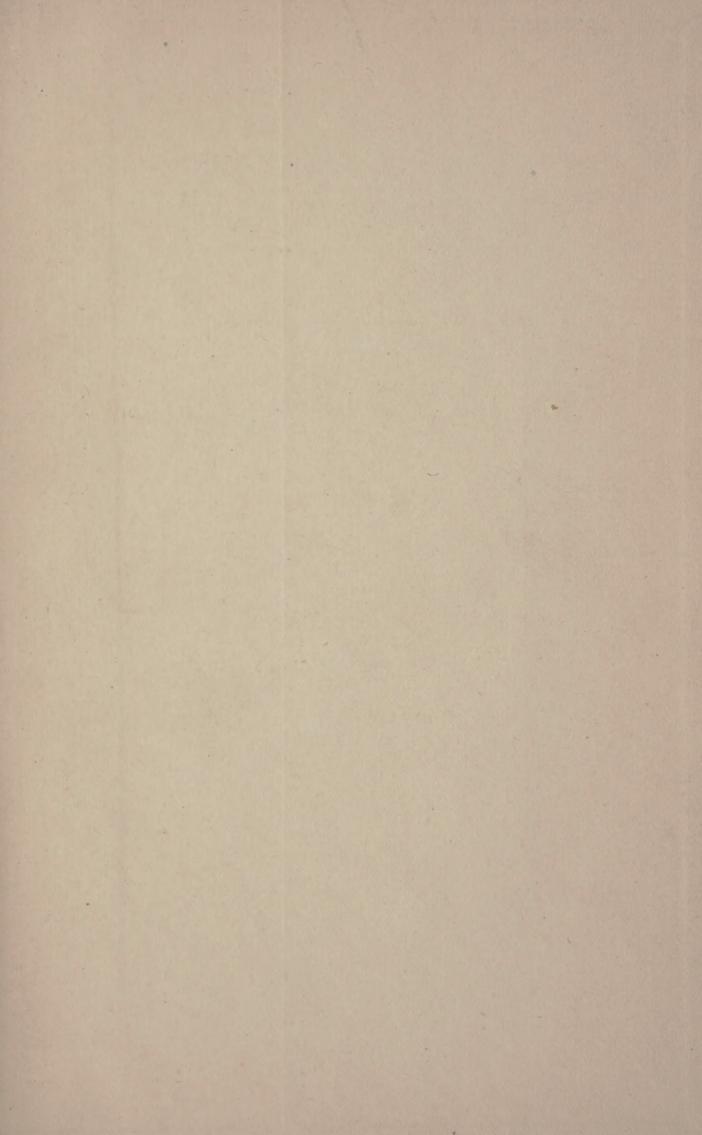


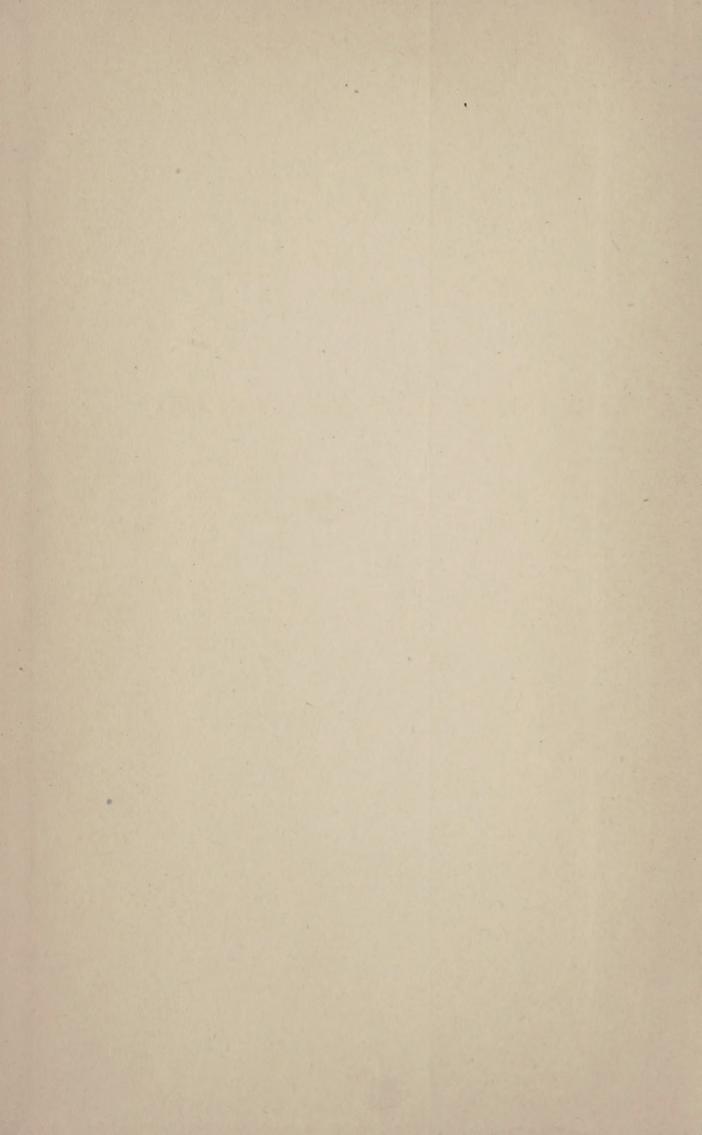
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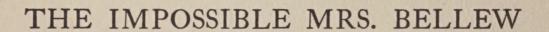
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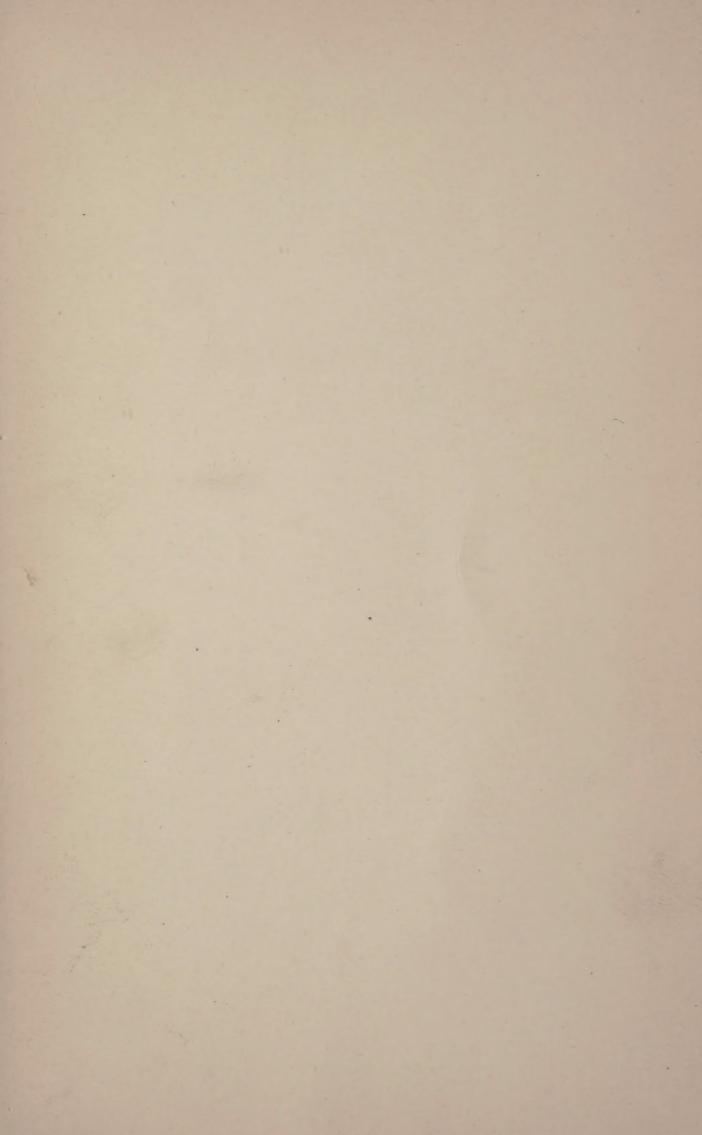
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### DAVID LISLE

AUTHOR OF "A PAINTER OF SOULS," "THE SOUL OF LIFE," ETC.

"What is left for us, save, in growth
Of Soul, to rise up, far past both,
From the gift looking to the giver,
And from the cistern to the river,
And from the finite to infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity."

BROWNING: Christmas Eve.

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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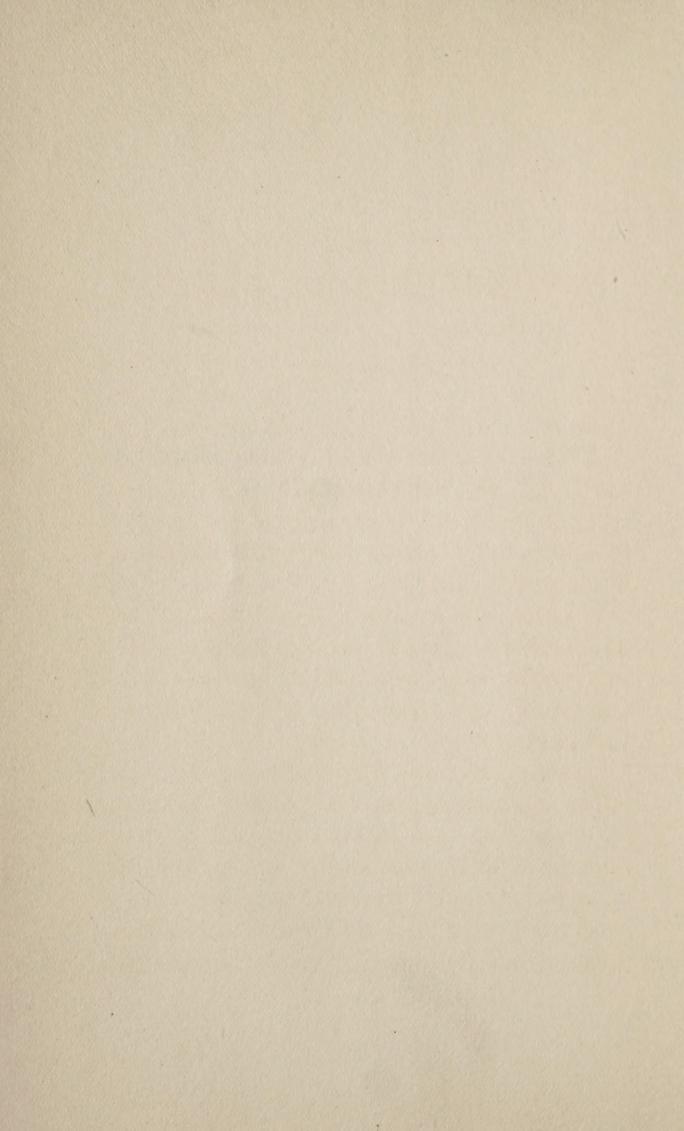
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TO

#### MY FRIEND

#### THE BARONESS DE LA FERTÈ-GONCER

OF "LITTLE OLD NEW YORK"



#### CHAPTER I

"MESSIEURS — faites vos jeux ——"
The monotonous cry cut the stifling air in the halls of the Casino. At a big table in the Salle Empire a thin hand crept out and twisted a little ivory ball. Swiftly it swung round and round in the striped basin.

A small fat man with a Jewish nose and bald head suddenly jumped up and began to place twenty-franc pieces on 32 and its neighbors. Several women with painted faces and dazzling jewels hastened to follow his example.

"That old chap has the devil's own luck."

The speaker was an Englishman standing in the outer ring of spectators. He had not taken the trouble to lower his voice and an indignant "Hush—sh—sh!" rose from the players.

Almost imperceptibly the little white ball began to travel less swiftly. A croupier turned a pair

of tired amorous eyes on the face of a beautiful woman who was sitting close to the Inspector's chair. She smiled and suddenly placed nine louis on 17.

"Rien — ne — va — plus."

The croupier's voice was extraordinarily monotonous. His fevered eyes remained fixed on the woman's face.

The ivory ball tried to slip into a refuge. It wavered — seemed uncertain. Then with a sharp click it fell and remained still.

"Dix-sept — noir — impair — et — manque."

The words were spoken without semblance of expression. A quivering sigh rustled the vitiated air. The small man with the Jewish nose stuck out his lower lip and made angry jabs with a pencil on a card.

Deftly the croupiers raked in piles of gold and silver. With amazing swiftness they pushed forward the sums won by various gamblers. A moment later notes and gold for 4,500 francs were pushed towards the woman who had pinned her faith to 17. She had staked the maximum en plein and had won.

Mrs. Bellew smiled across the table at the friendly croupier and pushed the notes and gold into her hand-bag. Before shutting the clasp she turned to a man seated on a high chair close by and held

out a billet de banque. She said a few gay words as he produced a flat box which looked like a portly cigar-case. Folding the bank-note tightly she slipped it through a money-box slit. The people round the table stared openly. She was a celebrity. One of the most talked-about women in Monte Carlo. Her generous tips to the croupiers gave reason to all sorts of rumors.

Betty Bellew leaned back in her chair and waved her fan to and fro. The heat was intense.

Outside in the Casino gardens carpets of pale pink begonias coquetted with audacious flashes of evening sunshine. Majestic branches of brooding chestnuts waved softly before a breath of sea breeze. Giant palms threw into shadow the faded greens of eucalyptus leaves. Near the lake a great bed of scarlet geraniums, framed in furry leaves, stared defiantly into the heart of the brazen ball, already tinged with crimson, which hung low in the sky. There was a whisper of running waters, a mysterious rustle of opening leaves. But inside the Casino the heat was terrific. Electric lights twinkled from behind artistic globes, but electricity alone does not suit the invisible powers who govern "The Tables." With electricity alone it might be possible for some adventurous person to suddenly, at a critical moment, cut off the current and plunge the room into momentary dark-

ness. But each one of the huge oil lamps which swung from massive chains above those "Tables" was a separate guardian. An individual thing which radiated light and heat and safety—all at the same time.

Mrs. Bellew's fan moved languidly. A tall thin man with aristocratic features and malicious eyes jostled the people standing behind her chair. He leaned over and whispered in her ear.

Without looking at him she shrugged her shoulders and turned away her head.

Paul Ourmansky looked angry. He was accustomed to fawning adulation. People said that the Czar had banished him because of a court scandal which had ended in the suicide of a beautiful girl in whom the Empress was interested, but Prince Paul was rich enough to force Europe to receive him. As a gambler he was extraordinarily lucky. In affairs of the heart he had the reputation of being invincible.

The eternal "Messieurs — faites vos jeux — rien ne va plus ——" had fallen from the lips of the croupiers several times since that notable win on 17. Mrs. Bellew seemed to have lost interest in the game. Her eyes rested dreamily on the everchanging piles of gold and silver. She had been yachting all the morning. She felt pleasantly tired.

Suddenly, without reason, she looked across the table. Her eyes encountered the sneering glance of a woman who had once been her intimate friend: a woman who had been her chief bridesmaid on that June morning when she, a light-hearted girl of seventeen, had joined her life to that of Lancelot Bellew.

A flood of soft color rose to her face. She felt violent. Alice Granville?

Eddy Granville's "clever" wife! The woman who had known how to go the pace without consequences. Who had known how to make "poor old Eddy" seem a thorough blackguard even though all his friends knew him for "one of the best." Alice Granville!

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The lovely flush died away. Mrs. Bellew's eyes gleamed as she bent over her purse and pulled out a bundle of notes. With absolute unconcern she looked across and examined the well-preserved face of the woman who had been twenty-eight when she, Betty Bellew, was seventeen. In that glance there was no recognition, nevertheless it was eloquent. It was Lady Granville's turn to look disconcerted.

She was a pretty woman with a mass of red-gold hair dressed fussily. Her nose was a trifle too long and her mouth a trifle too thin, but she had a maid who had learned her business in the service of a famous French actress and who was an incomparable masseuse. The pale, aristocratic face was free from wrinkles, though in some mysterious way it looked definitely unyouthful. But Lady Granville was a "clever" woman in more respects than one. The wisp of creamy tulle which circled and softened her throat had come to be regarded as one of her little fads. She was never seen without it. At that moment something prompted her to raise her hand and to pull the filmy net higher up about her chin. Mrs. Bellew looked contemplative. The woman with the red-gold hair bit her lip.

"That horrible creature has marvelous luck. They say she has won a pot of money this season." A cynical-looking man, unmistakably an English soldier, patted her shoulder softly.

"My dear woman, the Devil looks after his own! Don't grudge her a bit of luck."

Colonel Manners spoke slightingly, but his pale blue eyes looked greedy as they rested on the creamy skin and shining hair of the woman on the opposite side of the table. Mrs. Bellew glanced at him and he smiled slyly. Her eyes rested on his face for a second: then they slowly wandered on. The sly smile turned to a scowl. He turned to his companion and said something in a low voice. She laughed insolently. At that moment a tall man, with broad shoulders, quietly, but with intention, pushed the Colonel aside.

"Damn it all, sir — what d'you mean?"

The tall man glanced over his shoulder, but offered no apology. A chef de table moved uneasily in his high chair and made a noise with his lips. Colonel Manners stared at the intruder through his eye-glass and seemed about to fight for his place. Then, impressed, possibly, by the obvious vigor of the offender, he moved a little to the left. The great room was crowded.

A triple row of excited spectators stood round each of the long roulette tables. The atmosphere was stifling. A peculiar odor, which was not offensive but which seemed impregnated with some subtle narcotic, filled the air - the odor of money allied to strange perfumes and fevered breath. The green tables were partly hidden by their human frames.

The most democratic crowd in the world!

Here a Russian princess, with nervous fingers loaded with gorgeous jewels. By her side a famous demi-mondaine from the cabarets of Paris. Close by a wrinkled, painted wreck who was surely "somebody's grandmother." Men and women of all ages - of many different nationalities. Each one listening to the chink of gold. Each one breathing in poisoned air which reeked of amber and patchouli.

The woman who had been sitting beside Mrs. Bellew grasped an empty purse and suddenly rose to her feet. Prince Ourmansky slipped into her vacant chair. He leaned over and said something to Mrs. Bellew, but she hardly noticed him. Her eyes were resting on the face of the man who had elbowed the English Colonel.

He was her mascot!

This was how she thought of him. This was how she had been thinking of him for more than a week. From the first he had attracted her and she had quickly learned his name. "Helstan"-John Helstan, the famous novelist. The man who had written A Woman of To-morrow and A Girl - or Two, etc. She had once seen a portrait of him in a picture paper and, because she liked the way his hair grew on his forehead, she had cut it out and kept it. Now the man himself was before her and she decided that he was ever so much nicer than the picture: nicer and - different. Younger. Less defiant. Less - Betty had a little weakness for slang - "cocksure of himself." She was too beautiful to be specially vain, but of course she had seen at once that she attracted him. He was a model so far as manner was concerned. He didn't stare - very much. He never seemed to try to make his presence felt, and yet his eyes, which Betty had decided to consider "delicious," had spoken to her more than once. When he was in the Casino it followed that he was looking on, he never played so far as she could see, at her table. It also followed that when he was at her table she almost always won. Certainly he was her mascot.

Prince Ourmansky spoke to her again. He seemed to make some insistent suggestion. She shrugged her shoulders and tapped her fingers against the piles of gold that lay in front of her. Ourmansky leaned back and crossed his arms ostentatiously.

Betty furtively glanced across the table. Her mascot's eyes were no longer turned on her. They were staring, at least she thought so, at the number 17. Her lucky number!

She drew a long breath. The delicate wings of her nostrils quivered. She was strongly excited.

Very deftly, with practised fingers, she began to spread gold on the table. 17 - en plein. The "neighbors" of 17 in every possible way. Its "dozen." Its "column." Nine louis on each chance until she came to "color."

The other players leaned forward and watched

her movements. People left the other tables and tried to see what was going on. Those in the outer rows stood on tip-toe and asked questions in hurried whispers. Even the tired croupiers seemed interested. One of them—it was the man with the amorous eyes—stared hard at the face of the lovely plunger. The words "rien ne va plus" were quivering on his lips when Mrs. Bellew thrust notes and gold for 6000 francs on noir. A sigh of amazement ran round the table. It was a maximum and on an even chance.

There was a second of absolute silence.

Lady Granville's face looked evil. She leaned forward. The Russian prince sat back in his chair and stroked his mustache. Just as the monotonous "rien ne va plus" rang out, he pushed a roll of banknotes nearer to the lovely woman at his side.

The little white ball ran round and round in furious haste. It wavered — made a false attempt to find a resting-place — ran on again and then dropped into a narrow shelter with a sharp click.

"Dix-sept — noir — impair et manque." Mrs. Bellew had won!

The room hummed with excitement.

Women with flushed faces tried to add up the amount of that splendid coup. The croupiers to a man looked pleased. Even the sedate chef de

table seemed interested. The majority of the gamblers nodded and wagged their heads in sign of congratulation. Such a win was inspiring.

Two persons only seemed disappointed. Prince Ourmansky and the woman who had been Betty's chief bridesmaid.

The Russian said some words of polite congratulation when a big roll of notes accompanied by piles of gold were pushed forward in front of a small rake, but his eyes were sullen. As for Lady Granville, she made no attempt to hide her disgust. Some friends who had just come into the room were asking eager questions. She answered without taking the trouble to lower her voice.

"Oh, yes — she had made a big haul. Every one says she has 'the devil's luck.' Who is she?" - this to an acquaintance who was not well up in the doings of London society. "My dear Mrs. Langdon - you ask who is she? Why the Mrs. Lance Bellew, of course. The heroine of a perfectly ---"

Some one at the table said "Sh-sh-sh!" in a peremptory tone. The remainder of the explanation was inaudible.

The man whom Mrs. Bellew had called her mascot turned and looked at Lady Granville who was still whispering exciting details into Mrs. Langdon's ear. Just then a nice-looking girl who be-

longed to the same party interrupted the confidences. She said something breathlessly about "A Woman of To-morrow, you know." They all turned and stared at Jack Helstan. The girl, who was an enthusiastic admirer of "Helstan's views," looked at him with something like reverence in her clear blue eyes. She felt she would have "simply loved" to speak to him.

Helstan's dark eyes passed from face to face. When they reached Lady Granville the lines about his mouth hardened. Then he turned his back and once more looked across the green table.

Mrs. Bellew was gathering up her money and pushing it into her little hand-bag. He waited until she stood up and arranged her fur scarf. Then he turned away and walked towards the door.

#### CHAPTER II

WHEN Jack Helstan reached the big entrance doors of the Casino he paused.

For several minutes he stood on the top of the steps and watched the people passing in and out.

He was tall, apparently slight, but strongly built. Very English, and yet in some vague way un-English, as if the dominating blood had been diluted, perhaps even strengthened, by an alien, incongruous stream. And in a way this was true, for his grandmother on his mother's side had been a Spaniard—born and reared in an old square, blue-washed house in sunny Seville. Jack had never seen this wonderful grandmother. She, and the little brown-eyed mother too, had died when he was very young, but he had always surrounded her memory with glamour, and he had learned to speak Spanish quite fluently and in secret when he was still a raw school-boy.

Casual observers said that he looked rather like an Italian. By this remark they meant to express their conviction that he was not "quite English." They recognized the presence of warmth which was

mental as well as physical. Every one knows that Italians are explosive.

At any rate it was a "jolly good thing that there's nothing finicking about the chap"—the casual observer said this with gusto, for it's pleasant to feel certain that a writing chap who can write is likely to do credit to his own country.

So far as appearance was concerned Jack Helstan was sufficiently English to please the majority of his admirers. He had a nice feeling for clothes. His coats owed nothing to Italy or Spain, and he wore them in the genuine English fashion which indicates, unconsciously, that there is really only one way of wearing clothes. There were those, not many women, who held that, for a man, his dark lashes were too thick, but his gray eyes seemed incapable of looking skew-ways, and for that reason every one, even his men friends, a numerous band, overlooked the fact that they were passionate and eager: that they had curious lights in their depths: that they were, in fact, unusual. Still he was a queer mixture. No foreign element touched his neckties or shirts, but there was an underlying tinge of warmth on his slightly browned skin which suggested southern suns. For the rest he was clean-shaven and his mouth was remarkable. It was large, very firm, really beautiful in outline: a mouth which was the friend, but not the boon companion of laughter. It was a secretive mouth which ran easily in harness with the bold square chin and straight nose. Many women and all girls said that he was a handsome man. At any rate he was not ordinary. People found him more than a trifle baffling, notwithstanding his agreeable manner, but this was due to the fact that he was naturally, deep down, exceedingly reserved. On the surface his tastes seemed rather "foreign." He had a passion for flowers and soft materials and sunsets, and so on. Happily he never tried to force his ideas on other people, but sometimes he had a queer, really quite unconscious way of looking at the ultra-sensible ones of the earth as though he found them somehow amusing.

And then he was capable of violence.

At Oxford, where he had been a general favorite, he had achieved a notable scene. A sportive friend, cheered on by red wine, had once raided his bedroom and brought forth a square of parchment which had been tucked away between the leaves of a calf-bound edition of The Little Flowers of St. Francis. The square of parchment bore the words, carefully printed in Indian ink -

"Love is a sacrament that should be taken kneeling and Domine non sum dignus should be on the lips and in the hearts of those who receive it."

The sportive one, encouraged by a dashing horde whose breviary was The Rubáiyát, successfully misunderstood by each individual member, quickly composed an anthem in which the written words were repeated again and again, accompanied by appropriate gestures. The fun was furious while it lasted, but on that occasion Jack Helstan saw red. The devil in him broke loose and the brutal fight which followed might easily have ended fatally if he had not been dragged off in time. The affair was hushed up, but under the rose it was still discussed in Helstan's College. It happened to be the College which had once been very proud of the man who had conceived the quoted words.

That special act of violence Jack had never regretted. He had an immense reverence for women, and through women for Love. The square of parchment, torn and crumpled, still lived with the Little Flowers."

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Jack Helstan stood alone on the top of the Casino steps. It was evident that he was looking for some one. His eyes were alert. They glanced from right to left eagerly. He stood motionless, so centered in his own thoughts that he was hardly conscious of the men and women who brushed against him each moment.

Presently he became aware that some one was standing still by his side. He looked down. A pretty girl, whose cheeks were coated with graywhite powder and whose lips were deeply crimson, was standing close to him. She looked up into his face with an impudent air and then deliberately dropped her hand-bag. Helstan stooped and picked it up. As he handed it back he looked at the young face, which had already lost its freshness. smiled.

"Voilà, mademoiselle."

A pitiful question shot into the girl's crafty eyes. For a moment they stood face to face. Then she frowned and hurried on into the building.

A clock struck five.

The Place du Casino was basking in the rays of a brazen, already setting sun. The atmosphere teemed with animation.

Men and women of many different nationalities stood about in little groups in the middle of the white road, or discussed systems across round tables in front of the Café de Paris. Now and then a big car hooted impatiently and dashed up to the Casino steps.

The sky was blue and rose and - in the circle of the sun-god - golden as the heart of a magnolia blossom. A flight of white pigeons swept across the Moorish domes of the Café. As they drifted

earthwards their quivering wings seemed to take time from the amorous tango-music which floated out through the open doors of the restaurant. A peculiar mist like opaline gauze hovered over the marvelous gardens of the Casino. Odorous shrubs gave out a persistent perfume. Carpets of glowing flowers spread themselves over the brown earth. A slight breeze, fresh from converse with the sea, rustled the swaying branches of tall palm trees.

It was a magical moment.

Tack Helstan took off his soft felt hat and passed his hand over his hair.

Suddenly the pupils of his eyes expanded.

Mrs. Bellew was strolling across the Place with Prince Paul Ourmansky.

A second later they entered the Hôtel de Paris. Helstan followed.

His movements were not hurried. He crossed the street, slowly mounted the steps of the hotel, and passed into the big hall. Immediately an attendant in Eastern dress spoke to him and indicated a prominent table. He shook his head and slipped into an arm-chair which had been thrust into a secluded corner and which was almost hidden behind a clump of foliage plants.

He gave an order and leaned back.

It was the hour of le five o'clock. The great

hall was packed with amazingly smart women and their attendant cavaliers. There was a constant rustle of moving feet, an insistent hum of gay voices, a subtle frou-frou of women's costly gowns. From an alcove there came a murmur of dreamy music — the sob of 'cello and violin dominated by the passionate notes of a cymbalum torn by gipsy fingers.

Monte Carlo in early Spring!

Every room in the hotel was occupied. Visitors from Nice and Mentone and Cap Martin had come to "the Paris" for tea.

The great hall was skilfully broken up. It had a cozy air notwithstanding its size. The colors in it were cleverly blended. There was a good deal of gleaming white woodwork, and masses of flowers and palms. Vases of oriental china stood on carved pillars, and the comfortable chairs were covered with rich brocades in which many soft colors were blended. Deep reds, warm browns, subtle blues that would have delighted Fragonard and Nattier. It was not merely a handsome hall in which one could have tea; it was also a comfortable lounge in which one might pass an enchanted hour.

From behind his shelter of palms and ferns Helstan watched the lovely woman who, half-anhour before, had staked and won on 17. He had seen her before, many times. He had studied her face and admired passionately the feminine grace of her movements. He admired her more than he had ever admired any other woman. She had in some inexplicable way tangled herself in his thoughts. A case of vehement admiration at first sight.

But he had never tried to intrude himself upon her. Indeed, until that afternoon at the gambling tables he had not felt sure that she was aware of his existence. But that swift glance across the roulette table? That wonderful glance which had surely expressed silent understanding?

His heart was thumping against the breast pocket of his serge coat. He felt triumphant.

She was conscious of his existence — of his admiration. She had not seemed angry.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

He pushed his chair further back into the corner and leaned forward, resting his elbow on the tea table.

How exquisite she was!

Even at that distance he could follow the play of her beautiful lips. Full — passionate — the lips of a lovely child.

Very daintily she was pouring out tea for her companion, talking gaily all the time. The Rus-

sian's tired eyes were devouring her beauty. He was sitting very close to her, and once, in passing a plate of sandwiches, his hand touched hers. She drew back, laughing. Jack Helstan set his teeth in his under lip. For several minutes he kept his head bent. The fingers of the hand which rested on the arm of his chair opened, then closed, convulsively. He looked violent.

Some Englishwomen who were sitting at the next table glanced at him furtively. One of them spoke in a low voice. Her neighbor looked up eagerly.

"Do you really think so? Lost everything? But he ordered tea? Don't you think he'd have ordered brandy or something of that kind—if——"

"Hush — sh — sh!"

Jack had raised his head. A word or two of the conversation had reached him and something in the half-frightened face appealed to him. A smile stole over his face.

The Englishwomen were picking up their gloves and furs. A moment later one of them spoke softly, her eyes carefully turned towards the other side of the hall.

"I simply don't believe it. I think it looks most awfully nice."

Helstan stifled his intrusive smile as he allowed his eyes to rest a moment on the little fair creature

who had just called him "it." He wished that it could be possible for him to offer her a big box of candies! Just then the matron of the party rose and he was obliged to move his chair to allow them to pass. The fair girl came last. As she went by she bowed very slightly and said, "Merci." Jack stood up. At that moment Mrs. Bellew saw him. Their eyes met. It seemed to him that she smiled.

He sat down and poured out some tea without knowing what he was doing.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Bellew was in high spirits. She was looking exquisite and she knew it. If she had had any doubt about the becomingness of her Paquin gown the glances of the women in her immediate vicinity would have convinced her that it was "quite too too." One of the Eastern servants, an ebony creature in gorgeous attire, bowed low before her and held out a cluster of roses. She smiled deliciously. Every servant in the hotel was her willing slave. Prince Paul passed his long white fingers over his silky mustache. He handed the attendant a gold piece. The man's eyes flashed. He seemed about to refuse. Then he made a respectful salutation and slipped the money into his vest pocket. Mrs. Bellew laughed mischievously.

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"How exaggeratedly Russian you are! You imagine people are always looking for money. Poor old Mahoum — I really thought he was going to throw that *louis* at your feet. He's such a proud old dear. One of my devoted slaves."

Ourmansky smiled.

"Quel âge avez-vous, chère Madame? Seize ans? Dix-sept at most! Of your thousand and one attractions your marvelous youth is the most potent. When speaking to you one almost imagines that you must still be a jeune fille!"

He laid impertinent emphasis on the "almost," and Betty Bellew flushed. It was true that in many ways she was amazingly youthful. She still, and not infrequently, blushed like a young girl.

For a second she was silent. Then she held the roses against her face and glanced across the hall. He was looking at her. She laughed right out.

"Thank God for my good tea and for my youth! This is a rum old world, but it contains nice things for those who know how to appreciate them. It must be very convenient to be richer than the Czar, but I fancy you must sometimes find it a bother to feel Monsieur Sick-to-death-of-everything always tapping you on the shoulder. Still, one can't have everything. When you sign 'Paul Ourmansky'—with all those wonderful flourishes—you make

people skip about. You carry with you an atmosphere filled with such phrases as — fabulously rich '— terrific gambler '— intimate friend of the Emperor,' and then — just here they speak in awed whispers — the lover, amant, you know, of the Grand Duchess So-and-so.' It's all very wonderful, and one feels that the mantle of royalty has almost descended on one's everyday shoulders when one finds oneself in your company. By the by — you're very strong at English, much stronger than I am, which is natural since I'm three parts Irish — how many times may one say 'one' in a single sentence?"

He leaned back and looked at her through halfclosed eyes.

She was amazingly lovely. And elusive — still. He wondered if he had ever before felt so keen in pursuit of a woman?

Mrs. Bellew did not wait for an answer to her question. In fact, she had already forgotten it. She was looking at the pretty peevish face of the woman who had been her chief bridesmaid.

"Have you met Lady Granville? The Englishwoman in khaki and mauve powder, who is drinking champagne under that widely spreading palm? Poor dear Alice—not a bit changed. She was always à peu près, but never quite—right, I mean. She is telling awful stories about me or you or

both of us, and those dear respectable souls who are having tea with her are trying to remember their manners while they listen. One of them, the girl in buff with complexion to match and such a nice little smile, is getting furrows in her forehead from the polite effort she is making to see us without seeming to look in our direction. Yes—on parle bas! My poor character! Pulled to pieces and flung to the four winds."

The Prince slowly put his eyeglass in position and surveyed the group. He was impertinence embodied. Lady Granville hastily raised a cup of tea to her lips. Mrs. Bellew laughed softly.

"My dear friend, take care what you are doing. Tea and champagne make an awful mix and that little accident has thrown my nice girl with the polite forehead-furrows off her balance. You see it was her cup. And she has been brought here to-day by Alice Granville, who is rather a personage, etc., etc. And besides that, a genuine flush of anger utterly destroys the effect of mauve powder. 'Catty'? Of course you didn't say it, but you thought something of the sort—in Russian or French or any other language which may take charge of your thoughts. Certainly I am capable of being 'catty' when cats are in the vicinity. They're going! And Lady Granville is coughing violently, and it's all your fault. You really must

try and overcome that habit of looking at people as if they were performing animals and ridiculous at that."

Ourmansky leaned back in his chair. He was amused.

"'Catty'? What a wonderful language is your English. And what was that curious little word you taught me yesterday evening? 'Bounder'! Who is that big 'bounder' who is always staring at you and who wants to give me a dagger thrust—in the back?"

He looked straight at Jack Helstan as he spoke. His manner was insolent. Mrs. Bellew's eyes sought the chair in the secluded corner. She smiled maliciously.

"He's rather a famous personage, and, if the newspapers are to be believed, he does not stab in the back when he goes in for stabbing at all! And why 'bounder'? It seems to me that he looks nice as well as 'big.'"

"You know him?"

She paused a single second.

"Slightly."

"What does that mean?"

"Just slightly."

"Why do you not speak to him at the Casino?" She shrugged her shoulders.

"Ah — why '? That's the question. Didn't

Browning - I'm quite convinced you're better up in him than the brownest of the Browningites - say something about 'Never the time and the place and the loved one all together'? Perhaps the Casino isn't Mr. Helstan's 'place'? And here comes your Grand Duchess! This begins to be amusing."

Ourmansky's face grew very sullen. He was utterly careless about what his world said of him or of his doings, but there were certain social rules which had to be recognized. The very great lady who was now entering the hall was closely related to the Czar. She and he had been "friends." They had parted, but she was not of those who permit any one connected with them to take a liberty. She was coming up the hall, surrounded by friends. In another moment she must pass by the table at which he was sitting. People did not hesitate to say a great many unpleasant things about the charming woman who had taken tea with him that afternoon. What was he to do?

Betty Bellew leaned her arm carelessly on the table. The Grand Duchess had almost reached that particular part of the hall. Her arrogant eyes were turned on the flowerlike face. She had not glanced at the Prince.

Suddenly he rose and bowed low.

The atmosphere of the hall became agitated.

All eyes were turned on that prominent tea-table. The royal lady's face flushed, but she held herself in control. With haughty grace she extended her hand for Ourmansky to kiss. A moment later she had passed on. Mrs. Bellew was smiling mischievously.

"After all," she said, "it's worth while teaching you English. You already know how not to be a 'bounder."

The Prince leaned across the table and touched her hand.

"You realize how much I — appreciate you?" She nodded.

"I realize that you appreciate quite a good deal, grapes which are out of your reach. You are even wise enough to refrain from declaring them 'sour.'"

His eyes flickered.

"No! I reach up — and up — when the grapes are worth while!"

"I can see you. I can also, as in a vision, see a big gust of wind blowing a particular cluster of grapes in another direction — still further out of reach."

"I am very patient — when I feel disposed to be patient."

"And the reverse? Well, I've had a delightful afternoon. Shall we go and get a breath of fresh air?"

#### CHAPTER III

RS. BELLEW liked to have her own way.
When she wanted to have, or do, something special, she was capable of being exceedingly obstinate.

On leaving the Hôtel de Paris that evening she found herself wishing, for reasons which seemed to her excellent, to walk on the Casino Terrace alone.

Prince Ourmansky, who was also capable of much obstinacy, wanted to accompany her. There was a little duel of wills, but Mrs. Bellew triumphed.

With delicious determination she crushed his halfangry arguments. Her smile was adorable when she looked up into his face and thrust into his hands a bundle of bank-notes, giving minute instructions as to the manner in which he was to dispose of them for her on the big table in the Salle Empire. She knew he was certain to meet a host of acquaintances in the Cercle Privé, and she told him to wait there until she came back. Ourmansky hesitated. He was a man of violent temper. He was accustomed to doing exactly as he pleased. For a moment he felt tempted to rebel. Then his thin lips took an ugly downward curve and he shrugged his shoulders. Bowing low - so low that the salutation seemed almost impertinent he thrust the notes into his breast pocket and turned into the Casino.

Mrs. Bellew smiled mischievously as she walked quickly towards the tunnel which lies at the left of the big building and which leads to the terrace on the other side.

At that moment she looked absurdly youthful.

The expression on her face was that of a highspirited child who had found the way to carry out some choice, forbidden scheme.

When she reached the end of the tunnel she paused. From under a fringe of dark lashes she glanced down the broad, darkening walk. She had made up her mind to an audacious move, and wished to see if her calculations had been well founded.

Yes. He was there!

Her glance had flown so swiftly that no one could have realized its flight. Quite carelessly she advanced to the stone balustrade and leaned over, her eyes resting on the little crowd underneath, at the entrance to the railway station.

Jack Helstan was walking up the terrace.

a glorious evening. He had taken off his hat, and was holding it in the hands which were clasped behind his back.

The moment Mrs. Bellew emerged from the tunnel under the Casino he saw her. In the same instant he found himself beset by that strong excitement which her presence always awoke. He stood still abruptly. Then he continued his walk. Only a few seconds elapsed before he came close to where she was standing.

Twilight was falling. The terrace was almost deserted. They were alone.

He was about to pass her when she spoke.

"Mr. Helstan!"

He started. Betty laughed softly.

"You are tremendously surprised, and, of course, this is all wrong and very incorrect and vividly outrageous. We can consider that said and fully realized, and now I want you to tell me why you deliberately willed me to win on 17 this afternoon? Are you a hypnotist, or a clairvoyant, or what?"

Helstan was so amazed that speech was impossible. Face to face with the woman whom he so vehemently admired, he was tongue-tied. Her eyes were full of mischief. They searched his face. They were the eyes of a beautiful woman, but their expression was that of an audacious, confiding child.

"Of course, you are horrified, but all sorts of unexpected things happen at Monte Carlo. It's unlike any other place in the world. Something in the atmosphere makes us forget the things we have been carefully taught in schools-for-good-manners. Here we're just children of that hypercritical old fraud Nature. What we want to do we do. And I particularly wanted to ask you why you sent that tremendous blast of will-power across the table this afternoon? It was amazing. I don't believe you spoke, but I seemed to hear you saying: '17 — stake on 17.'"

Helstan found his tongue.

"I'm afraid I took a great liberty, but I couldn't get away from the feeling that you could win on 17. The number seemed to float about over your head."

Betty stared.

"I knew it; I knew you were my mascot. Ever since you came here I've had a run of luck. It's wonderful — delightful! You aren't thinking of going away — are you? I mean leaving Monte Carlo?"

She was looking up into his face — smiling, but anxious. Jack held his breath for a moment.

"No, certainly not," he said quickly. "I love the place. I wouldn't leave it for anything——" She laughed softly.

"That's all right. Now I can make my fortune quietly." She came a step nearer. "It interests you - the Casino?" she asked. "Are you studying it for literary purposes, or do you mean to play?"

"You know who I am - that I write, I mean?" The soft laughter broke bounds.

"Rather! I know a great deal about you heaps - simply heaps."

"You know something about me - impossible."

"'Something'? I know nearly everything. I know, for example, that your lovely old father is a clergyman - a very famous preacher and an equally famous writer of essays, etc. I know that he has managed to injure his throat, that he is here for fresh air and sunshine, and that he is taking notes for a book in which he means to denounce the Casino and all its works! I also know that you are tremendously famous - England's 'coming man'! And I know that your last novel - at least I think it was the last - gave the reviewers an indigestion and made the dear souls who do five teas a day blush just a weeny bit. Not that it was 'really suggestive, you know'"-her cheeky air was irresistible - "but it was 'certainly unusual.' "

Jack stared.

"But I don't understand. How in the world

did you learn all this? How does it happen that you take the slightest interest in me — or my father?"

"'Learn'? Oh — la la! Every official in the Casino has your dossier by heart. You and your father are famous personages, Mr. Helstan - very dear to the hearts of newspaper reporters. And besides, it's obvious that you don't come to the Casino to gamble, and so it follows that the people there have asked, 'Why?' People, especially famous personages, who come to Monte Carlo must expect to be discussed — and watched. There are lots of things you may do here - if you are discreet. You may lose or win a fortune - blow out your brains - make love to your neighbor's wife — drink too much champagne, etc., etc. But you must not be mysterious if you happen to be clever and famous, and you must not go about asking questions and taking notes. The Casino is strong enough to dictate terms to the whole of the Riviera and three parts of Europe, but it does not care to be held up to scorn by persons who can command a good deal of attention. At the moment we of Monte Carlo are inclined to believe that you and your father may be charming persons, but think twice before you make us suspicious!"

"This is the most extraordinary thing I have ever heard. I cannot understand it. And you — how

could you have heard anything about us? I had no idea you even knew of our existence."

She looked at him with wide-open, audacious eyes.

"For the son of a clergyman - and a Doctor of Divinity at that — you seem strangely lacking in Bible knowledge. Have you never heard of the brimstone lake which is prepared for persons who play pranks with truth? But I absolve you! It's quite right that you should seem to believe yourself an ordinary individual who can pass along unnoticed - even in the Casino. As to my personal knowledge of your family affairs, that's easily explained. I heard all about you from my favorite croupier."

"A croupier? You speak to them?" She nodded.

"Rather! Poor dears — they're tremendously human in their own inhuman way. And needlessly respectable. Quite the most respectable and hardworking people in Monte Carlo. But they like to gossip, and nearly all of them live in the Condamine. They pass your hotel in droves many times every day."

"You know where I am staying?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Of course."

<sup>&</sup>quot;It's absolutely extraordinary."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Not at all. It's Monte Carlo."

"What can it matter to - any one?"

"What you and your father think and write? It matters quite a lot, because you both happen to be persons who have managed to get hold of the Public Ear. The Casino doesn't mind parrot talk, but when it comes to an attack from a desperately serious personage like your father—"

She laughed and looked at him with mischievous eyes.

Helstan could not speak. He had a strange feeling that he was alone in an enchanted world with this woman whom he so passionately admired. A great silence seemed to compass land and sea. She was looking up at him, and at that moment he realized the compelling charm of her eyes.

They were golden-brown and soft as velvet, with fringes of dark lashes which made shadows, like faint stains, on her cheeks. And her skin. Delicious! Soft as the skin of a young child and wonderfully fair. She looked so young — so confiding. It seemed to him that he was looking at the sweet face of a friendly child.

The unrestrained admiration which shone in his eyes called up a wild-rose flush. She smiled. Two adorable dimples leaped into prominence. He caught his breath; her smile deepened. The softly crimson lips parted. She looked exquisite—one of those rare women who always seem virginal

- who retain in some mysterious way the charm of inconsequent youth long after youth, counted by actual years, has fled. The elusive "bloom" of which poets rave clung about her. She was gamine and femme du monde at one and the same time. A delicious bit of femininity who wore her white Paquin gown with the careless grace of one who had always been able to spend money freely.

Jack Helstan was profoundly excited.

They were alone on the terrace. All round and above them were the gorgeous foliage plants and luxuriant trees which make the sea front of Monte Carlo seem like the entrance to some earthly para-Myriads of lights twinkled softly in the distance, through the drooping leaves of giant palms. Faint music came from the brilliant Place, where hundreds of cosmopolitans were lingering for a short minute before pushing their way back to the Tables.

They were alone.

Unconsciously Jack drew nearer to the whitegowned figure. Betty leaned back against the stone balustrade and looked up into his face.

"I wonder why you wrote A Woman of Tomorrow?"

He stared at her. For a moment he found it impossible to answer. She laughed very softly.

"Is it a secret?"

Suddenly he came to his senses.

"Of course not. It's very kind of you to take an interest in the book, but—have you read it?" She nodded.

"Yes. And I have also read Why Not? I like it immensely — Why Not? I mean."

"You like it — that little book of essays by my father?"

"Why not?"

She was laughing mischievously. Jack felt baffled. He remained silent. After a moment Mrs. Bellew went on —

"I suppose you think that your book would have made a straight appeal to my heart and that your father's essays would have floated right over my head, but — I've my serious moments! And besides — I was brought up on Why Not? food."

"Yes?"

Mrs. Bellew looked impatient.

"You're surprised? You're convinced that your Woman of To-morrow is more in my line? Well, that's not surprising, after all. It's a tremendously clever novel. I wonder why you wrote it?"

"I had to write it."

She looked at him.

"I wonder ——" She stopped short. It struck

her that she must seem unpleasantly inquisitive. Jack came a step nearer.

"There were circumstances connected with the story which made a strong appeal to me. I felt that I must speak right out. Besides, I believe that in certain cases a woman has the right to take her life into her own hands, no matter what the world may say."

She looked at him sharply. Then she said gaily — "The people at the English Library up there on the Boulevard du Nord are booming your book in splendid style! The day I bought it one of them gave me a graphic description of your personal appearance and your monarch-of-all-Isurvey manner of walking. She finished up by assuring me that you were a 'joli garçon,' but the second young lady waxed indignant at that and said you were 'très distingué' and 'veeeery 'andsome."

He joined in the laugh. They seemed suddenly to have become good friends.

"And what did they say about my father? For I take it that you purchased Why Not? at the same shop?"

"Oh, no." She stopped short. The change in her manner, even in her voice, was so marked that Helstan feared he had, in some way, given offense. He felt uncomfortable. For a moment neither

spoke. Then Mrs. Bellew went on: "I have had your father's little book for some time. Nearly two years. I bought it in Seville."

"In Seville?"

His amazement betrayed itself. She bent her head in assent.

"Yes. I was looking for an English book in an old shop and I chanced on it. The cover was torn, but I managed to patch it up and make it look respectable. I have had it with me ever since."

"I wonder ---?"

Jack spoke impulsively, but the broken sentence was never finished. Mrs. Bellew was looking straight at him.

"Of course you 'wonder,' but—'why not?'
There are lots of things that we cannot understand—that we cannot follow out to the end—however much we may try. Your father has made some of these things seem easy—bearable."

He was completely puzzled.

Was she laughing at him? At the dear old man whose impossible views had so often formed a barrier which his eager aspirations found wearisome? What did she mean?

He was silent.

Mrs. Bellew threw one end of her ermine scarf over her shoulder and looked down the deserted terrace. "I must say good-evening. I want to go back to the Casino for half-an-hour before dinner."

She bowed, then, with a frank gesture, held out her hand. Helstan took it softly.

"May I walk with you to the door?"

"" Why not?"

The reiteration of the little phrase irritated him. She was welcome to jest with him as much as she liked, but — the old man?

He was impulsive as well as impetuous. Words which almost contained a rebuke rushed out.

"It was my mother who brought that little essay into existence. When she passed away my father was left alone — I was only a baby. He felt he must see her again. He asked himself, 'Why not?' Afterwards he came to see that his hope might help some one who also knew what it was to be lonely, and so he had the essay printed with the others."

" Yes."

From the single word it was impossible to tell what she was thinking, but Jack, somehow, realized that he had made a mistake. She had not been laughing at the book — or at its author. He was furious with himself.

She had been so sweet. So divinely, unexpectedly friendly. And he had, more than likely, offended her. Unconsciously he quickened his

steps. Betty laid a hand on his arm. She breathed heavily, with obvious intention.

"Are you training for a race? Or are you so desperately hungry that you feel you must run all the way back to your hotel?"

He pulled up.

"Please forgive me. I'm a rough boor. Not fit for polite society!"

He was laughing, but there was an appeal in his dark eyes. Betty nodded.

"I forgive you, and I really don't think you'd have a chance in a company of boors. You'd present the appearance of a raw amateur. Well, here we are at the dear wicked old Casino. Thank you — for understanding."

They were standing face to face under a big lamp. She was looking up. Her golden eyes were full of mischief. A delicious perfume of white roses and wood violets clung about her clothes — her whole person.

Helstan's eyes devoured her. She was enchanting.

A little hand gloved in pale suède stole out.

- "Shall we shake hands again just before we say good-by?"
- "'Good-by'? You can't mean that? You mustn't mean it!"

She laughed.

"You prefer au revoir?" She stopped short; her face changed curiously. "You know all about me, of course? Who I am — and all that?"

"I know that you are Mrs. Bellew."

"The Mrs. Lancelot Bellew?"

He smiled.

"I can understand that you are very much 'the - the beautiful Mrs. Bellew,' for example!"

She looked at him sharply. Then she laughed.

"You're clever. Well, so be it. We aren't strangers any more."

His grasp on her hand tightened.

"How sweet and lovely you are - how can I thank you enough? And — it's all settled — isn't it? I may come right up and speak to you when we meet — anywhere — everywhere?"

Again she scanned his face. There was silence. Then her soft mouth curved into a delicious smile.

"So be it," she repeated. "If you won't take a warning - well, let us be friends." The passionate admiration in his eyes took possession of her. Her fingers moved softly in the strong hand which had taken them prisoners. "It isn't a bit wise - but does that matter?"

He was silent.

She understood.

A moment longer their eyes exchanged confidences — then she abruptly drew her hand away

and walked quickly up the steps of the Casino. Helstan followed. Together they crossed the outer hall, but when they reached the doors leading to the gambling saloons she made a gesture of dismissal.

"You really mean it?" he said. "I must not come any further?"

"I really mean it. Thanks very much. It was delicious — the terrace, I mean."

Without looking at him again she passed in.

For several minutes he stood quite still where she had left him.

Then he turned away and walked out through the great entrance doors.

#### CHAPTER IV

RUMPELMAYER'S tea-room was packed with English people. The weather in London and in Paris had been atrocious. Frost and snow followed by dreary torrents of rain had filled the "going south" trains.

January is an ideal month on the Riviera.

Tout le monde had fled in the direction of certain sunshine.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Two tea-tables had been drawn together in one of the windows. The people who surrounded them were evidently of the same party. They were English with a single exception. The tall, very perfectly dressed woman, with obviously powdered hair and observant gray eyes, was an American. She was leaning back in her chair, looking at a pretty woman who was speaking eagerly.

"I think it's fearful rot. Of course we can't know her now, but what's the use of pretending that she has 'gone off.' She hasn't! Any one

with half an eye could see that she has the ball at her feet waiting to be kicked."

"The Russian ball, I suppose you mean?"
Mrs. Lulu Childers shrugged her shoulders.

"What's the use of being catty, Alice? Feminine mud, however well aimed, won't make her need henna or peroxide for some time to come."

"Bravo! Bravo!"

Sir Henry Chaplin clapped his hand softly, wrinkling up his weather-beaten face until he looked rather like an amiable Chinese god. He was a well-preserved man of seventy who daily, and lustily, thanked Heaven that he could still cast a salmon fly and hold his own in the hunting-field.

Mrs. John P. Wainright — the woman with the powdered hair — laid her hand on Mrs. Childers' shoulder. The buff silk blinds were pulled down half way, but a flash of sunlight rested on the facets of some superb diamonds which circled her fingers. Lady Granville's eyes looked greedy as they rested on the great white stones.

"My dear — will you take pity on my ignorance and tell me something about this wonderful person who seems to have upset the digestion of our beloved Monte Carlo? I should have imagined that this particular corner of Europe had had time to get accustomed to attractive ladies of the — half-world?"

"Oh — but she's not that. One can't know her now, at least so people say, but certainly she's not a demi-mondaine."

"Not a demi-mondaine — Betty Bellew? Well, if she isn't that, might I ask how you'd describe her?"

Lady Granville spoke with vicious emphasis. A sly smile stole across Colonel Manners' face. She saw it.

"What are you smiling at, Ralph? You know all about the wretched creature, don't you?"

Before he could reply Mrs. Wainright broke in, graciously but with determination.

"But, then, dear Lady Granville, it was I who asked for information. This beautiful but dreadful personage has attracted my attention at the Casino and at my hotel, where she is staying. I do not often feel curious about strangers, but I confess that I should like to hear something of her history."

"But surely you remember the case? It filled the newspapers four years ago? The Lancelot Bellew divorce?"

Mrs. Wainright shook her head.

"So many people get divorced. And four years?
A lifetime in our mad old world."

"She has been in the newspapers often enough since then. The divorce was only the beginning of her public career."

"Now, Alice — shut up! You can't be trusted to talk about Betty Bellew. If Mrs. Wainright wants to hear the story, I'll tell it. It's no good making things worse than they are."

"That is right, my dear. You shall be the one to enlighten my ignorance. Perhaps Lady Granville has some special reason for disliking Mrs. Bellew?"

"The best of reasons. They were once chums." Mrs. Childers looked indignant. Her pretty face was flushed. With a petulant movement she pulled up a wonderful leopard-skin scarf which had slipped from her shoulders. Mrs. Wainright looked at her admiringly.

"I rather like those flashing eyes! It's not a bad idea to help a lame dog over a stile, but I suppose you will all tell me that the lady in question is very well able to take care of herself?"

Colonel Manners laughed. Sir Henry Chaplin looked at him sharply, then deliberately turned his back. Dolly Childers spoke.

"It really was rather a desperate affair. You see, Lance Bellew was awfully good-looking but impossible. He did every mortal thing a husband shouldn't have done, and Betty was the loveliest thing you ever saw and just a kid — only seventeen — when she was married. She and I went to school together in Paris and she was too

sweet and pretty for anything. All the men made straight for her, and of course when Lance Bellew went wrong - quite openly, you know - she played about with other people. And at first there was nothing serious, but when Gerald Mansergh came along there were sparks flying round. He was in the Life Guards and all the women were simply mad about him." For a single second she stopped and shot a glance in Lady Granville's direction. That lady was looking down, but there was a vicious crimson spot on each of her thin cheeks. Mrs. Childers smiled. "He was a regular masher," she went on, "the women went down like ninepins when he looked at them, but he fell regularly in love with Betty and she with him. They had a lovely time until some one put Lance on the scent and made him kick. He hadn't the least bit of right really to say anything, considering how he'd been carrying on, but men's men! He elected to play the rôle of injured husband and made a frightful scene. Gerry Mansergh told him a few home truths and then Lance shot him - dead. They called it an accident, and of course the next thing was a divorce. Betty was like a mad thing. She wouldn't say a word in her own defense in fact, for ever so long she shut herself up and wouldn't see any one, not even her most intimate friends. And old Miss Bellew, Lance's aunt, who

adored him, went round saying frightful things, and when the divorce came on every one was on his side. When it was all over Lance went on a terrific spree and was found dead in an unmentionable place a couple of months later — heart failure or something of that sort, and meantime Betty had bolted with Hugo Acland, who had always been one of her fervent adorers. For ever so long before she ran off she had been fighting to get hold of the child, a small boy with a face like an angel, but Miss Bellew wouldn't give him up — wouldn't even let her see him, and so — she threw up the sponge."

"I see." Mrs. Wainright was looking at the excited speaker in a very friendly way. "I see. Not an unusual story, but she appears to be an unusually interesting woman. And the little child? She loved him very much, you say? It must have been hard for her to give him up?"

"Some people have a queer way of showing their 'love.' If Betty Bellew hadn't been such a selfish beast the boy would have been alive and well now — she practically murdered him."

"Alice! How can you be so brutal?" Mrs. Childers was vehemently indignant.

"Well—isn't it true? Didn't she steal the child from the governess who had charge of him at Biarritz? Didn't she carry him off to some place in the south of Spain? Didn't he die there of a neglected cold?"

"I didn't know. That horrid old Miss Bellew said all those things; but she always loathed Betty. I believe it was that old cat who made all the mischief about Gerald Mansergh."

Lady Granville laughed insolently.

"Are we to understand that you approved of Mrs. Bellew's 'affair' with Captain Mansergh?"

"Balderdash! We all 'approved' until she got caught out. Half the women in town would have given ten years of their lives to have been in Betty's place then — and you know it. Besides, if she had had twenty 'affairs' she wouldn't have been even with Lance Bellew."

"My dear!" Mrs. Wainright was smiling. She tapped Mrs. Childers' hand with her fan. The action seemed to indicate admiration, almost affection. "My dear - are you going to advocate equal rights in wrong doing? Sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose theory - eh?"

"And why not?" Dolly Childers flared up and looked very determined. Then she too smiled. "I suppose it couldn't work, but it does seem so horribly unfair. Betty was such a decent little soul - all heart and a perfect idiot so far as good nature and generosity goes. I met her in Paris three years ago, just after she came back from Cairo.

I spoke to her and she tried to shake me off, but I insisted on having it out and we had tea together. She was awfully reserved — she'd always been like that — but I could see that she was cut up. She said she had dropped out and that no one could do anything for her - and that she didn't want any one - the old set, she meant to come near her. She said she was just going to live her own life and that the kindest thing I could do was to let her alone. I said a lot of idiotic things that didn't really mean anything, for of course she was right - she had dropped out, and there wasn't the ghost of a chance of her dropping in again. And she knew it! We parted good friends, but since then she has always cut me and I've been mean enough to leave it at that. Oh we're a poor lot — we women. Almost any man will stand by a pal, but a woman ---?"

Mrs. Wainright shook her head.

"I'm afraid that is very true." Lady Granville rose suddenly.

"Et bien — que voulez-vous? One can't exactly recognize a woman of that type? One must draw the line somewhere! And it's no use trying to whiten Betty Bellew's character, for it wasn't only Captain Mansergh and Hugo Acland! There have been others, my dear woman!"

"I don't believe it! And even if it were true -

why not? If I were in Betty's place there'd be lots of 'others,' I can tell you. If our hypocritical old monde turned its back on me I'd make snooks at it, believe me. I don't say she hasn't been stupid or that she hasn't made a most awful mess of things, but she never had a grain of worldly wisdom in her composition. She was always just a foolish, lovable child."

"'Child'?" Lady Granville laughed aloud. "She's wonderfully well-preserved considering the life she leads, but one is hardly a 'child' at thirtytwo! And she must be that — at least."

Mrs. Childers smiled maliciously.

"Think so? Well — considering it was an open secret that the chief bridesmaid was exactly ten years older than the bride was on a certain June morning when Lance Bellew came into possession?"

The crimson spots on Lady Granville's face deepened. She looked furious. Mrs. Childers threw back her head.

"Pax!" she said gaily. "You deserved a little rap for being insistently catty. Every one who is any one knows that Betty Bellew was twenty-eight on the first day of this year - and she doesn't look that. She's impossible, I grant that, but she's a darling."

Lady Granville turned her back on the speaker and held out her hand to Mrs. Wainright.

"So sorry we must go, but I do hope we shall meet again — very soon. I wonder if you would waive ceremony and dine with me to-night, at the Métropole? My husband is motoring over from Cannes this afternoon, and I should so like him to have an opportunity of meeting you."

Mrs. Wainright made a gesture of polite regret.

"You are most kind, but it is impossible. I am engaged this evening."

"Oh, well—another time, please. And if my car would be of any use to you it is entirely at your disposal."

"Thank you, no. I am not fond of motoring. I have brought my carriages and horses here. I enjoy jogging along quietly in the old-fashioned way."

All the men had risen. Mrs. Childers came to the handsome American woman's side. She spoke very softly.

"I hope I haven't bored you? But I do so hate to hear them cutting at poor Betty. She has made herself quite impossible — that's true, but I don't believe she's a bit happy. She was devoted to the child — I see a great change in her since his death. I wish one could do something, but it seems useless to try."

Their hands clasped. Mrs. Wainright's fine gray eyes glowed.

A moment later she found herself alone with her old friend Sir Henry Chaplin.

Neither spoke just at first. Mrs. Wainright was examining the gay groups at the various tables through a pair of long-handled glasses. She was a majestic-looking woman. The famous Worth had once said of her that she understood the art of dress better than any other woman in the States. Certainly her appearance was regal. The costly simplicity of her black velvet gown and sable stole gave evidence for wealth wedded to fine taste.

Sir Henry passed his handkerchief across his forehead.

"Very warm weather for January, isn't it? What a brick that young woman is! One of the best and pretty as a peach. Ten times too good for Lewis Childers."

"Charming, and really beautiful. I mean to see a good deal of her while I am here. It is not often that one meets a woman who dares to speak so generously of one of our sex who has made mistakes."

"I believe you. A wretched affair from start to finish. Bellew was a regular bad hat, and the poor little girl's head was turned by admiration - and, by Jove, I'm not surprised. All the men went stark staring mad about her, and Bellew played right into

their hands. He was a 'Gaiety-Johnnie' of the most unblushing order."

"But what were her people doing? Why didn't they look after her?"

The old man stuck out his lip contemptuously.

"Her mother died when she was a little girl and old Beresford kicked the bucket just after the divorce. As for the rest of the family ---?" He shook his head. "A lot of goody-goody women who talked 'Christian Charity' without knowing the first thing about it. She had no very near relations, I fancy. A parcel of sanctimonious cousins who hated her because she was such a little beauty. James Beresford the father was a fine old chap. Proud as Lucifer and, as long as I remember him, stony broke. One of the oldest families in Ireland, the Beresfords, but they let their property go to pot, and at the last their place, Castle Martin, was a regular ruin. When Betty Beresford was married, I don't suppose the old man had a five-pound note to give her for pocketmoney."

"And the man, Mr. Bellew — was he rich?"

"So, so. He must have had a good income, but he had a weakness for young ladies in the front row of the ballet! A bad business from first to last, and the poor little woman was headstrong as a mule. When they refused to let her have the

child she threw up the sponge and bolted with Hugo Acland - a bounder who had been fired out of the Rag for sharp practise at cards. That was another of her big mistakes. Lady Acland went for a divorce, of course, and then there was no marriage. One or two people said that Betty had found out what a bounder he was and had left him before the divorce was made absolute; but anyhow, Acland came back to England alone, and only the other day I heard that he is engaged to be married to one of your countrywomen who has a heap of money! Such is life, my dear lady. No chance of the 'sauce for the gander sauce for the goose' theory coming into practise this side of the grave."

Mrs. Wainright looked disdainful.

"So that's the man Barbara Webster is going to marry?" She shrugged her shoulders slightly. "Well — I suppose it is true that some of our women love a title!" She paused, then she went "It seems a terrible pity about this Mrs. Bellew. She is so beautiful and her manner is so charming. She is staying at my hotel, and I often watch her in the dining-room. She has a great deal of quiet dignity and yet she seems full of fun."

"Genuine Irish — Betty Bellew. The true blend. I should never be surprised if I heard she had gone into a convent."

Mrs. Wainright laughed softly.

"Not just yet, I fancy. And perhaps she will marry again. I think you men are rather fond of marrying pretty women who have — been a little foolish?"

"Oh, as for that—not a ghost of a chance. Betty Bellew has been more than a little foolish, and she wasn't the least bit clever. Now, if it had been our mutual friend, Lady Granville—"He glanced up mischievously, then pulled a long face. "Well—well—of course one mustn't talk scandal. Granville's satisfied, and why should we—I, I mean—want to go one better than a satisfied husband! As for poor foolish Betty—there'll be no question of marriage, I'm afraid, but I wish she had the luck to pick up some really decent fellow who'd be good to her."

"What about this Russian prince who seems so devoted? I have seen them together, and his manner is exceedingly respectful."

"Ourmansky?" Sir Henry made a grimace. "A modern Crœsus with a black record. Yes—he's always in attendance, and I expect he means business, but he couldn't marry her if he would and certainly he wouldn't if he could! There's a Princess Ourmansky on the scene, saw her the other day at Nice, and the chap's in tremendous favor with the Grand Duchess Ivan—or was. I

for one would be awfully sorry if Betty Bellew swallowed that bait, and yet I suppose it's tempting enough."

"You knew Mrs. Bellew's father?"

The words were simple, but something in the tone brought a look of annoyance to the wrinkled face of the old man.

"I understand. You think I - a good many of us, if it comes to that - have taken a leaf from the Pharisee's book? Looks like that, but as a matter of fact I did try to keep in touch with her. I liked old Beresford and I liked the little woman herself, and after the child's death I heard she was in Paris and I went over to see her. She was staying at a queer little pension out at the Étoile quarter, with some woman who had been a governess or companion in the Beresford family, and she didn't want to see me. However, I stuck to it, and at last she came down and we had a sort of one-sided chat. I said what I could, but between ourselves it was a confoundedly tricky situation. She just sat and looked at me, and when I'd finished she said, 'You think I ought to take in plain sewing? But even a plain-sewer must have a character.' Of course I hadn't said a word about 'plain sewing,' but she's sharp enough: she knew I meant something of that sort. And then she just said, 'You mean to be kind and I'm not ungrateful, but the only real kindness any one can do now is to realize that I have dropped out and that I mean to stay out.' And what could one say after that? Just before I left I did mumble something about looking after the child's grave—keeping the flowers watered and all that—and her eyes filled up. She wouldn't shake hands, though, and when I met her in the rue de Rivoli the next day she cut me dead."

Mrs. Wainright looked at him.

"I am glad you did what you could. It seems a shame, but I suppose it's inevitable. Very often it happens that the best women go under while——"

The two old friends exchanged a meaning glance. There were a good many Alice Granvilles in their world!

"It's getting late." Mrs. Wainright made a movement in the direction of her fur wrap. Sir Henry stood up and arranged it with gallant care. As they walked down the quiet street together she said—

"If you are free this evening, will you dine with me—at half-past eight? I want you to meet a delightful compatriot of mine, Senator Willard. He is staying at the Hôtel Bristol and he has promised to spend the evening with me."

"Delighted! 'Willard' -- seems to me I know

the name? Is he a big man with a small wife and two handsome daughters?"

She shook her head.

"My Willard is not married. He is rather a famous personage. Very intelligent and the author of some remarkable books on American politics."

"Sounds interesting. I'm afraid I'll make a poor show, but I'll do my best to listen intelligently. What's a man of that stamp doing—at Monte Carlo?"

"Taking a holiday. He had intended going on to Italy this week, but he has made friends with the Helstans, who are staying at his hotel. He says the old man is quite fascinating — and the son too."

"'Helstan'? John Helstan the writing man? Didn't know he was here."

"Yes. And Dr. Helstan also—the famous preacher. Have you heard him?"

Sir Henry made a funny face.

"Not much in my line, I'm afraid—though I do go to Church—sometimes."

She smiled indulgently.

"He is a wonderful old man. Very simple but quite extraordinarily impressive. He is going to give a series of lectures in the States—on the subject of Christian Socialism, I think. I am anx-

ious to make his acquaintance. Senator Willard is going to arrange it for me."

"Not much difficulty about that, I should imagine." Sir Henry looked very admiring. "You always had a way of bowling us over like ninepins." They paused in their walk and admired the flowers in the Métropole gardens. Then, as they moved on, Sir Henry added: "Rum book — A Woman of To-morrow! Can't see what that fellow Helstan was driving at. People said it was intended as a coat of whitewash for that lunatic Westland, but I don't know. Mrs. Field, who ought to be Mrs. Westland but isn't, must have been a handful from start to finish. I used to know Field rather well. A bit of a bounder, but decent enough in some ways and a reasonable being - not a firebrand like Westland. The book is clever, but I don't see what it's aiming at. If every woman followed Mrs. Field's example there'd be a pretty kettle of fish in Society."

"Yes." Mrs. Wainright smiled. "Society, with a capital S, is a very precious affair. It is our duty to protect it."

Sir Henry glanced up.

"Sarcasm—eh? Well, no doubt it's justifiable. Society, even spelled with a little s, is fairly rotten, but still—we can't do without it. And as long as we stand by it we must try and play the game—

no two ways about that. I'm all against these writing fellows who want to upset the old conditions and who can't suggest anything to take their place—anything workable I mean, for there'd be the devil to pay if wives in general took Mrs. Field's point of view. I suppose it'll have to be a case of give-and-take to the end of the chapter."

"I'm afraid so." Mrs. Wainright smiled meaningly. "Indeed, I am very sure about that, but then—'give-and-take'? Don't you think that the average woman does a good deal of giving and that she is obliged to 'take' a good many things that are not quite agreeable to her?" Sir Henry squared his shoulders.

"My dear Mrs. Wainright, a clever woman can twist a man — any man — round her finger and he won't have the least notion that he's being twisted. You can catch lots of flies in treacle, you know. A soft voice and a coaxing eye can work wonders — even in the most obstreperous beast of a man. It isn't the Mrs. Fields of the earth who get the sugar plums."

"No." For a moment Mrs. Wainright looked grave. Then she smiled. "You are a wise man. What o'clock is it? Have we time to stroll down and see if any one is winning a fortune at the Casino?"

#### CHAPTER V

AM puzzled. I confess it. I cannot understand how you came to think of my country when you made up your mind to undertake this stupendous task."

It was Senator Willard who spoke. Dr. Helstan looked at him.

"I don't admit that it's 'stupendous,' but your question is easily answered. I made up my mind to have some talks with your people because I felt I needed to turn over fresh ground. All my life I've been digging and planting and watering my little home garden, and it seems to me I haven't done much with it. There are other men, plenty of them, who could have done as much as I've done, and that isn't as it should be, for I know the truth. You see, my dear Senator, it's like this. A good many of us have a notion that certain things are true, more or less. A good many of us are ready enough to walk hand in hand with the Master when we're in our bedrooms—alone. A good many of us are fine

theoretical Christians, but when it comes to every-day practise, that's a horse of another color. I myself have been a theoretical Christian for many a long day, but I feel that it has only been within the last few years that the inner meaning of Christ's message has been fully revealed to me. I've been amongst those who 'see through a glass darkly,' but suddenly, not so very long ago, it was given to me to see 'face to face.' I know now that the Master came to show us how this life here on earth might be glorious and splendid and successful. He came amongst us to show us how to be happy and prosperous here as well as to indicate the road to heaven."

"My dear sir!"

Senator Willard gasped. He stared at his companion. Then he ran his fingers through his thick white hair nervously. He was a handsome man, with clean-cut features and remarkable green eyes; eyes which at that moment looked puzzled.

The old man smiled.

"Well?" he said quietly.

There was silence. Then the American leaned forward.

"Do you know anything about the conditions in my country? The conditions of everyday life, I mean?"

"Not much, but I know that your people are

dear human folk who aren't ashamed to work and aren't ashamed to play. I believe that over there in your big country you're more in touch with naked truth than we are here in Europe. Anyhow, I feel I must try my hand on a piece of fresh ground. I see how a grand crop might be raised - the grandest this world has ever known — and I want to have a free hand. I've been preaching theoretical Christianity, with a decent amount of practise thrown in, for nearly forty years to my own peo-I haven't the courage to stand up and tell them that I've been indulging in a sort of top-dressing, and that, so far as I'm concerned, their roots haven't received much attention. I'm a coward, Senator! I don't want to climb down at home until I've climbed up, visibly, abroad. I want to have a fair

The American nodded his head. Dr. Helstan's courage was of the quality which did not call for question.

"I hope you will not be disappointed."

chance with a fresh audience."

He spoke meaningly. The old man's face beamed.

"No fear of that. I'm going to aim high. I'm going to try to completely revolutionize one or two of your big states, but I shan't be disappointed if I only succeed in making a bunch of men of your type put on their thinking caps. You, my dear

Senator, with a few of your friends, could do amazing things. You could, most probably, make the United States the master of the world."

Mr. Willard burst out laughing. The old clergyman was not at all disconcerted.

"You think I'm in my dotage? Not at all. What I say is true, literally. If you and a few of your influential friends, public men, lived — not talked, but lived — the life of Christ every day and all day, the 'conditions' of your country would change, and very rapidly; couldn't help it, for you're the type of man who can set the fashion. You, and men of your type, can decide what a man can do or can't do if he wants to retain his social position and the consideration of his neighbors. You have the power to decide the quality of the standard. You have the power to force men to keep up to that standard or to lose caste. You have the power to insist that the essentials of life must rank before any other thing."

"'Essentials'?"

"Right living and growth of soul."

"Yes."

Mr. Willard looked down. He was disturbed. Under the surface he was irritated. Such impracticable ideas as these had haunted his life from time to time. He had realized the necessity of thrusting them aside.

Dr. Helstan put two large lumps of sugar into a small cup and stirred it.

"Something like molasses or treacle, eh? I like my coffee very sweet! A little time ago I got it into my head that sugar irritated my throat, and I gave it up, but nothing came of that great sacrifice."

He sipped the dark liquid with evident relish. The green-gray eyes watched him. After a moment the old man spoke again.

"It's like this. If you saw a poor fellow suffering tortures from some hurt or wound, and you had it in your power to cure him, you'd be a mean cur if you passed on and left him to suffer just because you didn't want to take the trouble to help him - isn't that so? Well, I'd be just the same sort of mean cur if I didn't try to make people see how they can be cured of all their sufferings - how all their wrongs can be righted -how they can have a grand time here on earth before they march out, shoulder to shoulder, in the direction of heaven. No end of mischief has been done by the belief - and it's very general — that an active Christian can't have much of a success here below. Of course he can. He can have a happy home. He can love and be loved. He can help and be helped. He can be surrounded by friends, and he can be surrounded by

things that are really beautiful. Why, just think of it! Your multi-millionaires make a tremendous talk about their marvelous pictures - their portraits by this old master, their landscapes by the other one. They give thousands and thousands of pounds for these pictures, and yet the man who comes to mend your locks, the carpenter who comes to make your windows shut easily, might, if he liked, enjoy something far finer and more precious than these 'works of art.' He might enjoy the works of Nature from which the 'works of art' were copied! Did that ever strike you? The Czar of Russia may have in his possession the most valuable, from the £.s.d. point of view, landscape in the world. Any working man who has eyes in his head can see the original of that landscape, or something very like it. You smile? But, believe me, I'm right. All the really great artists in the world have said much the same thing. They've realized that at best they were only copycats. They've never even pretended that they could rival Nature. The cleverest of them has never been able to give us the texture of a young green bud."

"You are going to try and make my countrypeople see that Nature ranks before imported Art? You are going to try to explain your wonderful scheme of Christian Socialism to our working men?"

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"My dear sir, it isn't my scheme." Dr. Helstan's eyes twinkled. "It's a scheme, and a mighty practical one, which was set forth a long while ago in the Sermon on the Mount. And why shouldn't your man-in-the-street pay attention? Didn't the Master elect to come upon earth in the guise of a poor working man? Didn't He give the go-by to princes and high-priests and millionaires? Surely to goodness there's nothing stupendous about the conclusion that He must have had some excellent reason for coming to us as a member of the laboring class? I don't suppose you imagine that He couldn't have chosen to be born in a palace if He had fancied purple and fine linen — eh? Seems to me there's nothing far-fetched in the notion that His message to working men ought to carry weight, since it was delivered, in person, by One who knew what He was talking about? As to Nature versus Art, I don't suppose I'll have much time for enlarging on that subject — this time. But if all goes well - if your people take to me - who knows? Maybe I'll give them a few chats on True Æstheticism next year!"

They were both smiling. Senator Willard looked keenly interested.

"If I can help in any way ——" he began. The old man broke in —

"Of course you can help - enormously. Just

you get it into your head that the battle would be won, almost, if we could between us make Jesus Christ fashionable in a single state — even one of the small ones. If we could make it 'the correct thing' to follow in His steps we'd have laid the foundation-stone of the finest and most successful country in the world - New America! And I'm not just now thinking of the Kingdom of God in Heaven — I'm thinking of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Do the right because it's right, and leave the consequences to Him — that's the way to make a big success of life."

"It is a beautiful thought."

"But you think it isn't workable?" Dr. Helstan leaned forward and planted his hands on his knees. "Tosh! It's workable and washable all through — the genuine original stuff, I mean. I'm not concerned with what men, even the wisest of 'em, have made of Christ's teachings. I'm concerned with the teachings themselves, as He spoke them and lived them. No mistake there. No wavering; no uncertainty. Plain common sense spoken by a working man for the benefit of working men. He didn't condemn the pleasant accidents of life money, social position, fame, and so forth. He just put these accidents into their right place."

There was silence. Then Mr. Willard spoke, rather abruptly -

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"Have you ever visited the States, Dr. Helstan? New York, for instance?"

"No. Why? You mean that the conditions over there aren't like the conditions in London or in any little country village? Much of a muchness, I imagine. In New York you play about with millions of dollars. In our villages the folks play about with pennies; but where's the real difference? Do you suppose that Almighty God bothers to count the money we're handling?" The beautiful old face beamed. "Why, no - of course not. What matters to Him is how we're dealing with the money. What we're feeling about it. How we got it and what we mean to do with it. His message was intended for the man who has to consider farthings as well as for your multimillionaires; for kings and presidents as well as for the man who goes hungry because he hasn't a penny to buy bread. And mark this: it's the same message for every one. 'For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

"'Love'?"

Dr. Helstan nodded.

"It is impossible."

"It happens to be the one thing necessary."

"But we are human beings. We are not God."

"We are - because we're His children and the

brothers of Christ. And why is love impossible? And if we find it impossible, why do we dare to call ourselves Christians? My good sir, haven't you yet realized that if we, even a handful of us, managed to live the thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians the burning questions of the day would cease to exist? Labor leaders would have to find something else to do. Socialist clubs might put up their shutters. Our workhouses, aye, and our madhouses too, would be empty."

"It is magnificent."

"But far-fetched?"

The Senator smiled.

"In a Christian country?"

"I should not use the words far-fetched, but certainly your beautiful ideal does not seem to me to be workable."

"Why? Because you really believe it's natural for the average man to hate instead of love? To wound instead of comfort? To say unkind and hurtful things instead of things that might be helpful?"

"' Natural'?" Mr. Willard shrugged his shoulders. "It is all very well to talk of love, but when it comes to everyday life - in business? Amongst strangers?"

Something forceful leaped from Dr. Helstan's eyes. He sat up very straight in his chair.

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"That's just the point. 'Strangers'! But there aren't any strangers! You've just driven a nail into the heart of the Lost Secret—into the spirit of solidarity which is wandering about seeking for a home. You're a very intelligent man, broad-minded beyond your fellows, fine and clean and steadfast in character, and yet even you can't, or won't, look facts right in the face."

"'Facts'?"

"Yes — facts. The one great fact from which we cannot escape is the Family Fact. We cannot live for ourselves alone, no matter how much we may want to do it. We cannot get away from the fact that we have a universal Father and that we form one big family - a great family which contains millions of smaller and more intimate. but not more real, families. We're all brothers and sisters. Every individual who claims the protection of the Christian Flag is a brother of Christ. Every man, woman and child in the world belongs to the family of God the Father. We may kick against the idea, but we can't get away from it. We're born into a Universal Brotherhood. Our brothers and sisters may not want to recognize us, but that doesn't alter the truth. We belong to them and they belong to us. We can't get away from them and they can't get away from us. It's a 'fact' that hits you in

the face as you hustle along through life. Every man who counts recognizes it and salutes it, sooner or later. Look at St. Francis of Assisi! Wasn't he vehement on that point? And Tolstoy and Marcus Aurelius - don't you remember his 'We are fellow-citizens and share a common citizenship: and the world is as it were a city'? That dear soul Abdul Baha knows all about this 'fact' which you say is unwashable. And the truth about Universal Brotherhood was well understood in the Church of the Catacombs - way back. And just read G. K. Chesterton's essays and see what that queer grand chap has to say. My dear sir, the air is filled with the microbes of Truth. Sometimes they claw at each other and form into a nice little compact body. Sometimes they just float about and seem to disappear. they're there all right! No doubt about that. We don't seem to be doing much on the surface, but deep down there's movement. There are signs of that great movement on all sides - in the most unexpected quarters. Men — especially in your country - are beginning to wake up."

"' Universal Brotherhood'?"

Mr. Willard repeated the words as though they fascinated him. The old man smiled at him.

"Isn't it fine? Doesn't it open up grand possibilities? Good-by forever to loneliness and want and double-dealing. Every man for himself and for his brother. If the devil thinks he's being defrauded, let him fatten on the mean thoughts and mean actions which we have cast aside. Let us take a bath of Love and then walk out and 'salute interiorly the angels in those we meet.' Just you try the experiment, and before you've got half-way down the street you'll find those angels rushing out to return your salute! Man alive, let's have done with all this nonsense about 'I—I—I—' It isn't 'I'; it's 'We.' The sooner we begin to realize that the better for us."

"A wonderful dream."

"The Great Reality." Dr. Helstan stretched out his hand, white and wrinkled. "My dear man, we are brothers and sisters. All the serious thinkers in the world are at one on that point. They express themselves in different ways, but it comes to the same thing in the end. Take New Thought, for example. What is it—the soul of it, I mean? Why, it's just the crystallized form of 'Faith, Hope and Charity, and the greatest of these is Charity'—or Love."

Senator Willard stared at the old man. He felt fascinated.

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All his arrangements had been made for an on-

ward movement in the direction of Italy when, ten days before, he had made the acquaintance of Dr. Helstan and his son.

From the first they had interested him.

Very soon he had found himself looking forward with keen pleasure to the evening chats with the father and the long morning walks with the son.

He was himself unsettled. A serious illness had given him time for rather unwelcome thought. It had also given him a good excuse for a holiday trip in Europe. He was traveling alone. Until he made acquaintance with the Helstans he had had little to do with those who surrounded him in trains and hotels. But from the first he had found something in the old clergyman which appealed to him insistently. A dauntless spirit seemed to spring forth from Dr. Helstan's soul, and to tangle itself in a mass of secret thoughts and aspirations which confused his own brain. His natural reserve had unveiled itself, little by little. He had unconsciously expanded. There had been moments when he had even hinted at the ideals which had been with him in early youth: ideals which had raised obstacles in the path which led to great financial success. When he was alone with Dr. Helstan the memory of his New-England mother came back to him with startling clearness. He seemed to hear again her

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gentle, curiously determined voice. To listen again to her quiet explanation of the Sermon on the Mount.

His mother had, in her own quiet way, realized Christianity as Dr. Helstan realized it.

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They were sitting in a secluded corner of the great hall which was used as a smoking-room and general sitting-room by the visitors at the Hôtel Bristol.

The furniture was very comfortable. Here and there large palms and ornate screens formed a cozy oasis in a desert strewn with cane coffee tables and attendant chairs. Newspapers and magazines, in half-a-dozen different languages, testified to the cosmopolitan qualities of the hotel and of Monte Carlo.

It was comparatively early in the evening; not yet nine o'clock. A good many of the coffee tables were still at liberty. From the brilliantly lighted dining-room, away to the left, there came a hum of voices and gay laughter. It was the hour of the entre-acte. The gamblers had unwillingly torn themselves from the tables at eight o'clock. They would certainly return to the Casino before 9.30. But even they felt the need of an entre-acte in which dinner might be consumed and "runs" discussed.

Senator Willard leaned back in his chair and looked, a little furtively, at his companion. The old man was contentedly sipping his over-sweetened coffee. His fine face was calm. There was something noble about the manner in which he carried his broad, bent shoulders. He was a very remarkablelooking old man.

The first time Mr. Willard saw him he had been strongly reminded of the engraving by J. A. J. Wilcox which forms the frontispiece of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Essays. Dr. Helstan was exceedingly like Emerson in appearance. There was the same broad, finely developed forehead, the same prominent nose, with well-defined nostrils and arched bridge. Even the short, quite white whiskers were like those worn by Emerson in the Wilcox engraving. Dr. Helstan was clean-shaven save for these side whiskers. No mustache hid the firm lines of his mouth, nor interfered with the compelling charm of his smile. People said that it was "a splendid face." No one had ever accused it of weakness. Determination and great kindness dwelt side by side in the depths of the deep-set gray eyes framed in bushy brows. Determination and kindness joined hands with an extreme, entirely natural simplicity of manner.

It was impossible to overlook Dr. Helstan.

His personality breathed distinction which was,

in some subtle way, almost as physical as it was mental.

For the rest, he was a tall man, who conveyed the impression of having once been an athlete. His clear skin spoke of excellent health. The exquisite condition of his large white hands whispered secrets of the bygone days when "Willy Helstan" had been considered a bit of a dandy! And this spirit also revealed itself in the scrupulous neatness of his dress. He was a man who never, in any circumstances, laid aside his "uniform." Parsons in mufti were his special aversion. It is recorded that he, on one memorable occasion, spoke his mind freely to a very influential bishop who believed in kow-towing to continental opinion.

This eminent divine had graciously drawn Dr. Helstan — whom he secretly suspected of highly objectionable, revivalistic tendencies — into conversation at a royal garden party. A moment before the King had passed, and in passing had shaken hands cordially with the "man of peculiar views." One cannot be more fastidious than a king in his own garden, and so the bishop had drawn the old man into his charmed circle. Chance brought up the subject of continental tours, and the bishop plainly stated that it was a mistake for "Catholic" clergymen to give cause of offense to their "Ro-

man Catholic" brothers. On the continent so he stated - "ordinary clothes" - modest and discreet, of course - were the right thing. Dr. Helstan had remained silent. His silence had attracted attention. Questions had been asked. In answer the old man had said very quietly, "I have never yet seen a Roman Catholic priest in knickerbockers and a tweed cap, my lord." The statement was considered irrelevant and highly unsuitable. A very great lady, distantly connected with royalty and a cousin by marriage of the bishop, had at once, and with great decision, changed the subject. People - many of them of undoubted social importance - had expressed the opinion that Dr. Helstan had put a spoke in his own wheel.

And Dr. Helstan had not been disturbed.

He had met a great many old friends at that garden party. He had had, so to speak, a high old time. The King and Queen, who knew nothing about his limited appreciation of clerical mufti, had spoken to him more than once with marked cordiality. Indeed, the Queen, whose name was Alexandra, not Mary, even went so far as to ask if his only son intended "entering the Church."

It had been a delightful afternoon, and since Dr. Helstan had really no desire to become a bishop, and was entirely satisfied to remain the autocratic, very kindly shepherd of an enthusiastic flock - why, all had ended well. Indeed, things had gone wonderfully well with the old man until the moment when a sorely overworked voice refused to answer the familiar call. He had been addressing an open-air meeting in a Surrey village when the breakdown occurred, and at first the doctors had said that it was only a passing trouble; they became more serious as remedy after remedy failed. Finally change of scene and complete rest was recommended. The Riviera was suggested, and every one hastened to speak of the quiet charms of Mentone, but Dr. Helstan was accustomed to deciding for himself. When he made up his mind to winter on the Riviera he also made up his mind to settle in Monte Carlo. like to be in the heart of things," he had said humorously; and after the first gasp of amazement his parishioners had accepted his decision with enthusiasm.

For more reasons than one Dr. Helstan welcomed the quiet life — so far as he was personally concerned — of the famous gambling center. There were matters he wanted to think out: his lecture tour in the States; his boy's future. He was a man who had always given high rank to personal freedom of thought and, within certain limits, of

action. He felt strongly that in matters of ethics every man had to find his own level. A word or two of advice here and there mightn't be amiss; better still, the unfolding of experiences which might bear on this circumstance or that. He had done what he could to put his boy on the right trail. He had never missed an opportunity for strengthening weak points and extending strong ones. He had taught his son to regard him as a friend rather than as a father. They had been very happy together. The years of separation, when Jack had had his fling in the Paris studios, had been happy also. The old man had known no real misgiving until the publication of A Woman of To-morrow.

That was a blow. And a severe one.

The book was clever. Much that was in it was true. Much was pernicious. This was Dr. Helstan's firm conviction.

He knew, of course, that it was a vindication of "The Westland Case," but he felt, and strongly, that "The Westland Case" could not be justified. Much less could it be taken as an example of future feminine possibilities.

He had always deplored his son's friendship with Bernard Westland. For Mrs. Field he felt much sympathy, but he could not throw the mantle of justification over her action and contin-

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ued attitude. A Woman of To-morrow was to him as a thorn in the flesh. He never willingly spoke of it.

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The two men sitting in the hall of the Hôtel Bristol had been silent for quite a little time. People were beginning to come in and out. A pretty woman with rouged cheeks went by and paused near the coffee table. She tentatively took up a newspaper which was lying on the corner of it. Dr. Helstan bowed and smiled. She moved away, then stopped and seemed about to speak. She was one of those who ardently admired the tall man with the well-set head and broad shoulders who had strolled out on the Boulevard de la Condamine after dinner. She felt tempted to enter into conversation with his father. The old man looked at her. The expression on his wrinkled face was kindly, but she grew suddenly uncomfortable. She caught up the newspaper and crossed the hall. Senator Willard's eyes followed her.

"You will not find it difficult to supply your book on Monte Carlo with effective types?"

"Poor souls." Dr. Helstan stopped short. He too, looked after the showily dressed woman. "Poor souls," he repeated. "I've no intention of writing them up, or down. They are accidents,

many of them. Which of us could dare to throw a stone?"

The American was silent. Then he said —

"I did not know you were interested in New Thought. In my country it has taken a great hold on many of our leading men — and women too."

"I know. That's one of my reasons for feeling so hopeful about rousing up a state or two. The soul of New Thought is Love. Its fruits are Faith and Hope and a glorious belief that we're surrounded by friendly microbes. The essentials of New Thought are the essentials of Christianity—just as they are the essentials of life itself."

"You really believe that mountains can be moved by faith?"

"My dear Senator, I more than believe; I know. Fill yourself with love and faith and you can't help being a magnet. People may pretend to ridicule you, but they'll snuggle up when they've got knocked down and want to be comforted. Believe in a man and let him know you believe in him. Your belief will water his best possibilities. It will make them sprout and blossom."

"You are speaking of a man's religious possibilities?"

"I'm speaking of the possibilities that make him

worthy to be a man and a brother. Every man has a lot of God the Father and of God the Son in him. Every man has fine possibilities, and it's my business, and yours, to cherish and encourage these precious germs. In the garden of life it's our habit to keep on our heavy boots and to tramp about without caring a row of pins what mischief we may be doing. On this side we see what looks to us like arid land - dry, desolate, neglected. We trample on it and jeer. And - who can tell? - it may well be that if we had taken the trouble to water it, if we had taken the trouble to soften the top hard soil, something might have quickened underneath. Something might have pushed its way towards the surface, enticed by those few drops of friendly dew. You never can tell, exactly, the true nature of the soil in the little bit of life garden which surrounds you. Best be on the safe side. Don't tramp about without caring where you're going; keep on refreshing the soil with the magic waters of belief. People may say you are cracked, but they won't avoid you!"

"Dr. Helstan." The Senator spoke impulsively. Then he pulled up. A faint tinge of color mounted to his pale face. He was strongly excited, but it was not easy for a reserved nature to expand. He smiled, and his smile was returned.

For a second or two there was silence; then he added, "Your ideas are very fine — very stimulating. I do not wonder your son takes the business of life seriously."

"Jack?" The old man glanced up. "Yes—he's serious enough in his own way."

Vivid curiosity crossed swords with extreme delicacy of feeling; curiosity was victorious.

"You are in sympathy with his rather advanced views about the future of women?"

"I? Far from it." Dr. Helstan spoke emphatically. "I think the boy has got hold of a lot of valuable ideas, but he is running them in harness with notions that are dangerous, if not absolutely pernicious. He's of age and his own master, and I'm all against an over-dose of parental advice, but I've never made any secret of my dislike for his last book. The story is founded on an episode which I consider actively sinful, and the mischievous part of the business is that he has an attractive style of writing. People read him. Some people follow him. I'm certain his intentions are good, but you remember the old saying about 'good intentions'?"

The Senator's smile broadened.

"Yes, indeed. I can well understand that your son might easily become an influential leader. His personality is dominating — and very attractive."

"He's a nice boy. His heart is pure gold, but he has always been obstreperous — as a small kiddy, as a schoolboy and as a young man. Curious, that? Now, I'm the most easy-going individual in the world — shouldn't you think so?"

Mr. Willard laughed outright.

"Naturally! I quite realize the amount of success one might hope for if one tried to change any of your views."

The old man's chuckle was delightful. Then he suddenly became grave.

"I expect I'm an obstinate creature, but I've never seen much good come of wibbly-wobbly ideas. I believe in searching for the truth and then standing by it in all weathers. We've mighty little time to accomplish anything worth while in this life. It's a crime to waste precious years trying to build up attractive-looking edifices on rotten foundations."

"But I imagine that your son believes his foundations to be substantial? This is my idea; I have not yet had an opportunity for discussing the matter with him."

"Yes—no doubt. Jack wouldn't lead people astray knowingly, but all the same that's just what he's doing. How can you apply the word substantial to a 'foundation' which is made up almost entirely of sin?"

"You are thinking of A Woman of To-morrow?" Dr. Helstan nodded.

"The woman was unhappy - much to be pitied - but that didn't justify her in living with a man who was not her husband."

"It is a big question." Mr. Willard sighed and leaned back heavily in his chair. "A terribly serious question. One can hardly realize the horrors of married life when the man and woman have ceased to care for each other — when they have perhaps arrived at actually disliking each other. Of course, in my country, at least in certain states, divorce can put an end to the matter, but in England it is not so easy."

"Thank God! As to your easy-divorce states — I hope to tackle them before I pass away — it's an outrageous idea. Marriage is a sacrament, my dear sir. It should be taken after prayer and fasting. More than that, it's a sacrament which can only be set aside by death. If two people find that they have made a grave mistake, if it is, for really serious reasons, impossible for them to live together, let them quietly separate. But let them, both one and the other, live decently. This lamentable idea of legalized free-love should be stamped out. That man Westland, one of Tack's friends, has been pushing the notion forward. I find the same idea in A Woman of To-morrow. Jack has managed to cover the thing up in a cloak of sympathetic talk which makes one forget the actual truth, but there's no getting away from the fact that it's a sin for a woman to live with a man who is not her husband. Circumstances can't alter that fact. Nothing can alter it. I used the right words when I spoke of 'rotten foundations.'"

"You really believe that marriage can only be broken — really broken — by death?"

The old man looked at him.

"Why, of course. 'Until death us do part.' Those are very beautiful and very solemn words. And they were words which had a meaning in the long-ago days - when I was married, for example." He stopped short. His piercing eyes grew soft. His wrinkled face glowed. Senator Willard looked away. It seemed to him that he had no right to mingle with those happy, beautiful memories. A moment later the old man went on, "People are very fond of saying that the conditions of women have improved — that they are improving every day. I don't believe it! Forty years ago our dear women were proud and happy to know that a home was a kingdom and that the man - their own special man — was the master of that kingdom. They didn't want any one to tell them that they were right in line with him, for he made them

feel it and know it - all the time. I don't say that men and women were any more perfect in those days than they are now, but they certainly understood the rules of the game of Life far better than our modern men and women. The women of yesterday had the good sense to take for granted that the men they loved and the men they married would be true and faithful to them. They did just what I was recommending to you a moment ago - watered their own little life-garden and expected it to produce love! Maybe it was easy enough to throw dust into the eyes of those oldfashioned women, but I'm of opinion that the men of those days weren't specially proud of such dust-throwing. If you've a mate, who is also your best friend, you don't feel inclined to do things that call for lies, and if you have done any of these things you just slip back home quietly and try to make amends by being extra helpful and considerate."

#### CHAPTER VI

A T that moment some one quietly laid a hand on the old man's shoulder. He looked up.

"Jack. You're welcome." Dr. Helstan turned in his chair and looked hard at the new-comer. "Why — what's happened? You've the real 'God's in His Heaven — all's right with the world' look in your face. Any special good news in your letters?"

Jack shook his head.

"It's a glorious night. The sort of night that makes one feel thankful to be in the South. There's plenty of sea salt in the air. Senator, will you come for a walk when Dad goes up to his room?" The American made a gesture of assent. He too was attracted by the glow of radiant happiness on the sunburnt face. It seemed to express triumph.

"You can start out as soon as you please. I've some work to do. I'm going upstairs directly."

"Do you write at night?" Mr. Willard's eyes expressed kindly interest. "Don't you find that it interferes with your rest? Makes you sleepless?"

"Not at all. I'm used to jotting down notes at odd moments, night or day. You're late, Jack. What have you been doing - the Casino?"

Jack nodded. Mr. Willard looked at him.

"Didn't some one make a sensational coup this afternoon? Some people who sat near us at dinner were talking about it. They said some lady, a famous beauty, had had extraordinary luck?"

"Yes. Mrs. Bellew won a good deal of money."

"" Mrs. Bellew '? That lovely woman who is always shadowed by a Russian prince with an impossible name?"

"I fancy there's only one Mrs. Bellew here. She's a beautiful woman."

"I've seen her." The old clergyman leaned forward as he spoke. He was looking at the Senator. "She has faithful eyes. I wonder what her people are thinking of to allow her to stray about down here."

Jack stared. One of his hands was lying on the table. The fingers suddenly closed tightly, then opened. Mr. Willard looked surprised.

"'Faithful eyes'? I did not know you were so observant, Dr. Helstan - where feminine beauty is concerned?"

The old man smiled.

"I see a good many things. That pretty young woman interests me. I'm going to find out who she is and something about her. I once saw a boy trying to drown a puppy. Seems to me that pretty creature has eyes like that small dog."

Jack stood up so suddenly that the basket table rocked. He steadied it with a furious hand. How could any one — even the dear old man — dare to say such a thing about her eyes? He strode across the hall and took up a magazine. He held it upside down. Staring at the blurred letters he tried to control his temper. The old man had not meant to be disrespectful — that was certain. He had even meant to be kind. Jack bent his head over the book. There was something in that queer notion — after all. He hated the manner in which the idea had been expressed, but the idea itself had foundation. "Faithful"? It did somehow express those wonderful eyes — at least partly. They were so extraordinarily youthful and confiding.

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Dr. Helstan looked after his son.

"He's restless. Take a long walk while you're about it. It will do you both good."

The Senator nodded. Jack was coming towards them. His father turned to him.

"Seen anything of the Ellerbys to-day? Kate said something about coming over for tea, but she didn't arrive. No sign of them at the Casino?"

"No." Jack was leaning against a pillar. He

looked tall and masterful. "Mrs. Ellerby says she hates Monte Carlo more than ever this season. I believe you've lost caste with her since you refused to take her advice about settling down at Mentone or Cannes."

He was laughing. The old man laughed too.

"I expect so. She's a dear soul, but a wee bit strait-laced — from the point of view of gay dogs like us — eh, Senator? Mentone for nice old ladies — Cannes for semi-royalties, but gay 'Monty' for us."

The American nodded.

"Yes, indeed. And certainly you are becoming quite well known at the Casino. I saw you chatting with one of the head men, I think they call him a chef de table, this morning. How are your notes going on? Do you find any difficulty in obtaining the information you need?"

"None at all. I keep on asking questions and sifting the answers. They're quite a decent set of fellows up there. I've never made any secret of my intentions or ideas, but I believe they've realized that I don't mean to print any lies. If the Casino can't stand up against facts, so much the worse for the Casino. I believe in facts, you know. And essentials."

"Oh, 'essentials'?" The Senator smiled. "You should have come in a little earlier, Helstan.

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You would have found your father trying to teach me the meaning of that word."

"I've no doubt! Which essential was it this time, Dad?"

"Love."

"Universal?"

"And individual."

Jack's face glowed.

" Amen."

For a moment there was silence. Then the old man stood up. He laid a hand on his son's arm, very affectionately.

"Good-night, Jacky — I'm off. Go out and walk off some of the excitement that's bubbling up inside you — but not all of it. I shall want to see the 'all's right with the world' look on your face when we meet to-morrow morning."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

A glorious night.

One of those cool southern nights which seem to borrow fragrance from distant pine-woods and freshness from restless seas. The sky, darkly blue, was powdered with stars, but there was no moon. Ribbons of silver light, reflected from the thousand and one lamps of Monte Carlo, danced to and fro on the waters of the bay. There was music in the air, soft insistent music which whispered to the senses. In the shadows of the trees that clung to

the heights of Monaco night birds rustled stealthily. Some strange, brooding spirit seemed to float above the sea, vast as a limitless desert, which stretched out and out towards the mysterious horizon. Across the bay all the world was obeying the magnetic call of that little ivory ball which never tires of rushing round and round in its black and crimson basin.

Monte Carlo ablaze with light.

On the heights of Monaco witch-like shadows and a great silence.

The two men paced along. The hill was rather steep. They were walking slowly. For some time neither spoke. Jack Helstan was bare-headed. He had not even taken the trouble to bring a hat with him. His hands were clasped behind his back. His head was thrown up. His eyes were fixed on a dazzling cluster of lights across the bay — on the terrace of the Casino. He was dreaming. How lovely she was. How sweet. How absolutely delicious. His heart quickened its beat as he recalled, word by word, look by look, the wonderful happenings of that afternoon. Could anything have been more natural - more exquisitely natural — than the way in which she had spoken to him? Of course she could never have done such a thing if she had not realized that they two were in sympathy. It seemed a conceited thing to say, even think, but then — hadn't she given him the right to be conceited? Hadn't she singled him out in a *very* special way?

Every pulse in his body throbbed as he realized that he was now really acquainted with her. That when they met on the morrow he would have the right to salute her—to smile—even to speak. They were more—much more—than mere acquaintances. He felt that they were already, as she had said, something very like friends.

He stood still and leaned his hand on the stone wall which protected the hill road. His companion took a few steps in advance and then he also paused — his eyes fixed on the far-off lights of the Italian coast.

The air was still, and yet it seemed to hold something that vibrated. Something that caressed the soul like a breath of soft music.

A great white cloud, lonely and frightened, hurried across the middle heavens in haste to join its comrades, floating out towards the open sea. From bursting buds on shrouded trees there came a dry sweet smell.

There was tumult in the air, for all its stillness.

Jack pressed his bare hand hard against the cold stone. Her wonderful, wonderful eyes!

How surely they had pierced their soft way right

into his heart. How confidingly they had spoken to him - in language far more eloquent than articulate words. The eyes of a confiding child. "Faithful eyes"? Yes - his father had described them rightly.

He felt furious when he realized that he was, even now, uncertain as to their actual color. Golden-brown? Tawny-yellow veiled in velvet brown shadows? He could not be certain. But he knew that the long lashes were dark and that there were delicious maddening dimples in the rounded cheeks.

Hot blood mounted to his face. He had curious depths of reserve in his character. He was capable of shyness even when alone with his own thoughts. He hated to lift a veil, even the veil which lay across his own heart. There were possibilities that were sacred — that could not be given form even thought form, without something like treachery.

A woman to him was sacred because she was a woman. And Love — with all its divinely secret possibilities?

There was to-morrow.

And after that there would be many "tomorrows." She was here, at Monte Carlo, where

people who are strangers must meet half-a-dozen times every day. Where people who are not strangers might meet when they pleased. In surroundings that were ideally beautiful — with life in the glory of Spring.

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Senator Willard suddenly broke the silence.

"How is the new book going? Have you actually begun to write it or are you still making notes?"

Jack started. For a moment or two he could not gather in his straying thoughts. He stared at the speaker.

"I beg your pardon ---?"

Mr. Willard smiled.

"Away in the land of dreams? I expect it is I who should ask for pardon. One ought to think twice before breaking into a famous author's reverie."

"Oh — nonsense. That's all right. I was just thinking what a heavenly night this is. You were saying ——?"

"I only asked if you had yet begun to write the new novel?"

"No. A Woman of To-morrow seems to be going strong. There's no special hurry."

"I have often wished to have a chat with you about that book. It interested me very much, but

I confess I don't quite understand what you meant to prove - for it's evidently a novel with a purpose."

"Yes." Jack took a step forward. His companion joined him and they resumed their walk up the hill which led to the heights of Monaco. For several minutes neither spoke. Then Jack said, "It's an open secret that it's a fairly accurate history of certain happenings in the lives of my friends the Westlands. Bernard Westland is my best friend, a tremendously decent, clever fellow, and I was so disgusted with the way people talked about him and Mrs. Westland that I asked them to allow me to state their case plainly - in a novel. It's loathsome — the way people sneer at things they don't understand and blacken the character of women who ought to occupy thrones."

Mr. Willard looked surprised.

"But your Woman of To-morrow was not married to the man she lived with? I remember that you made rather a point of the fact that her husband would not divorce her?"

"Wretched cad." Jack spoke violently. - Mrs. Westland has no legal right to Bernard's name, though she's his wife in every decent sense of the word. Field, the husband, wouldn't divorce her because he's a mean spiteful brute. First he insulted her grossly and then he made it certain that every one else would add to his insults. If I had been in Bernard's place I'd have put him out of the way long ago."

"My dear friend." Senator Willard laid his hand on the young man's arm. But he was smiling. "It is well that these dark walls have not ears. You might find yourself in a tight corner if anything happened to this tiresome husband."

Jack said nothing. His mouth was hard. In his eyes there was an angry light. The American looked at him. Then he slid his hand through his arm.

"Come now — be just. I can understand that you sympathize with your friend and with the woman he loves, but you must admit that it is not quite agreeable for a husband, any husband, to discover that his wife has not been faithful to him. And I take it that this was the case?"

"Not at all. The thing happened just as I have described it. Captain Field was, and is, a drunkard and a gambler. He led his wife the devil of a life, but she made the best of it for the sake of the child, a boy whom she adores. Field spent or lost all their money and she had to work. She's a very clever woman, and after a time she got a post on *The Gazette*, Westland's paper, you know. She and Bernard were good friends but nothing

more. That's certain. Of course he cared for her and she for him, but they both have strong views about what is due to Love - real love, I mean. They'd have been content to remain good friends right on to the end if Field hadn't behaved like a despicable cur. He came home one evening and found them together, going over some important proofs. He was drunk and he elected to make a scene. He said frightful things and Bernard couldn't stand it. He just told Field what he thought of him and - carried off Mrs. Field. Naturally they expected a divorce, but no! The fellow didn't want to marry again, and he saw his way to a dastardly revenge. Westland should never marry the woman he adored. Just at first Mrs. Field was like a mad woman. She even wanted to ask the creature to take her back because of the child. But Bernard held out. He knew Field fairly well - he knew the brute would do anything for money, and after a time he proposed to him to give up the boy in return for a substantial sum, paid monthly and regularly."

The contempt in his voice was startling in its vigor. Mr. Willard looked at him.

"And the Field family? They consented to this arrangement?"

"Old General Field kicked up no end of a row, but Field himself smoothed the matter over. I

don't know what he said to his people, but he was clever enough about the whole affair. He agreed to 'lend' the boy to the mother on the understanding that when Gerald was fourteen he should be free to choose between the two—between his father and mother, I mean. Old Field had this extraordinary affair made legal in some way and there it has rested. Bernard is not a rich man by any means. It hasn't been easy to find the money for Field, but he has never grumbled. He'd do anything—make any sacrifice—for the sake of the woman he loves."

"I see." Mr. Willard spoke quietly. He seemed thoughtful. "You have followed the story very accurately in your Woman of To-morrow. An interesting case. I wonder how it will end. I remember that you made the son turn out splendidly from the mother's point of view?"

"Yes."

"Does it seem likely that young Field will take that line?"

"I don't know."

Jack spoke abruptly. His companion, ever the most courteous of men, hastened to apologize.

"My dear fellow — forgive me. I was so much interested in this curious story that I forgot to be polite. It's inexcusable to ask intimate questions." Jack shook his head.

"Not at all. You were quite right to ask the question, and there's nothing intimate about the whole affair. Every one discussed it in London some years ago. That was why I got the Westlands to let me tell the real truth. As to the boy Gerald? It's hard to say. He has had extraordinary advantages. Westland is a very exceptional man, akin to a genius, and Mrs. Westland is one of the most splendid women I have ever met. The boy has lived in a pure, fine atmosphere."

"I hope it will all go well, but I confess I should feel just a little doubtful." Mr. Willard stopped short. Then he said, "He is still quite young, this boy?"

"He will be fourteen on the 30th of this month."

" Ah ——"

The Senator made a little sound with his lips. Jack looked at him, then looked away.

"The critical moment? I wonder."

"So do I." Jack spoke impulsively. "And it's amazing that one could find cause for 'wonder' on such a subject. If you only knew that brute Field—and the life he leads—and the people—the disgusting men and women that are always about the place. And then the Westlands? An ideal home every way you look at it."

"Except --- " Mr. Willard stopped short,

then added, "It is intensely interesting. If you do not think that I am asking too much, will you let me know the boy's decision — when he makes it?"

"Certainly. Bernard will write to me, of course, but I confess I feel nervous. The boy is a reserved, rather sullen little chap, and I've an idea that Field is up to some mischief. He'd do anything to hurt the woman who is still his wife legally—I believe he hates her. You see, she had found him out long before the final scene. And being the splendid woman she is it was impossible for her to live with him in any intimate sense. She stayed in his house because of the child, but she would have nothing to do with the man. And the mean scoundrel resented it."

"Naturally."

"Quite unnaturally, I think."

Senator Willard looked at his companion. He seemed about to speak, impulsively. Then stopped short.

They had reached the circular plateau, on the top of the hill, which overlooks the open sea. They sat down on a low wooden seat. For several minutes neither spoke.

The night was still.

They seemed alone on the heights of the strange rock which has been called the Rock of Hercules. Mr. Willard took off his soft felt hat and threw up his head to greet the chill keen air. His eyes were fixed on the vast field of dark waters. Jack Helstan stared across the bay. The white towers of the Casino stood out against a background of invisible green. Was she there? Was she playing—at that moment? Was she alone?

He felt restless.

Suddenly he was seized by a mad desire to run down the hill and to cross over into the light of those twinkling lamps.

In a quarter of an hour—less—he might be near her. Standing behind her chair. Touching, almost, the exquisite perfumed hair.

He rose to his feet. Then, abruptly, sat down again. Mr. Willard looked at him.

- "You are very much interested, so I judge from your book, in exceptional women?"
  - "You mean Mrs. Westland?"
  - " Yes."
- "I don't consider her exceptional though of course she's exceptionally gifted. She interests me very much because I think that she, in a way, represents women at their best."
  - "You consider it an ordinary type?"
- "Very much more ordinary than people think—
  or seem to think."

"She represents your Women of To-morrow?"

"Yes. Very largely." Jack spoke decidedly. "I believe we're on the eve of a feminine revolution, and I can see women like Mrs. Westland leading the revolt."

"A revolt against what your English journalists call 'mere man'?" Mr. Willard was smiling.

"A revolt against the men who look on women as 'fair game.' Against the men who treat them like capricious children—stuff them with sweet things—hang bead chains round their necks—tell them lies 'for their good.' Women are splendid reasonable creatures if they get fair play, and they're much wiser than we are in many ways—and finer. They're capable of extraordinary devotion and of the most sublime sacrifices. And then they are naturally discriminating. The casual life of the average man would be impossible to any normal woman. When they love, real love I mean, they're capable of leaping right into the depths without thought of consequences, but the life of an average man—impossible."

He spoke violently. The American looked at him.

"You think that men and women are very different fundamentally? I wonder if you are right. I have sometimes thought that deep down they are strangely alike."

"You think that a refined woman, such a woman as Mrs. Westland for example, could take a lover here and another there, and so on? That she could give herself to a man unless she loved that man with her whole heart and soul?"

"I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Westland, but I imagine her to be quite an exceptional woman. Not that I believe the average woman capable of being what you call 'casual' in the ordinary masculine sense of the word, but I do believe that women, even the best of them, are very human. Of course the *grande passion* theory is ideal, but I contend that very many sweet and refined women have passing fancies which at the time seem serious enough."

"You are speaking of flirtations?"

"Perhaps — at first. But flirtation may easily become a dangerous pastime — given a meeting of certain temperaments and — opportunity."

Jack turned round suddenly.

"Are you speaking seriously?"

Mr. Willard smiled.

"You are indignant, but really—I was quite serious. I grant you that the average woman does not start out with any intention of wandering into the danger zone. She has not, most happily, the masculine weakness for openly painting the town red, but—things happen. And I do not

think that the grande passion has necessarily very much to do with these happenings. I can see that I have fallen in your estimation, but since we are discussing this delicate subject I may as well say what I think. I have read one or two books written by your friend Westland, and I have a fair idea of your own views. You both want to put women on a pedestal, and that's an excellent idea; but I have a notion that women, all women, are already on a pedestal — that they were put there by Almighty God. It seems to me that you and Westland, and all those others who are interested in sex questions, might do well to look at realities rather than at ideals, for the realities of life are fine enough in their own way."

"I don't quite follow you."

"I am not surprised, for it is difficult to express what is in my mind. I merely meant to suggest that it might be better to realize that Nature is very much the same in both sexes and to give women full credit for temptations resisted rather than to insist on placing them in a separate, glorified arena."

"They belong to a separate arena. They have a right to a position high above the head of the average or even exceptional man. You are trying to rouse me — I can see that. You don't really sympathize with such abominable ideas."

"Do not push me over the cliff if I insist that I really do believe men and women to be very much alike au fond. My experience tells me that there are hidden depths of refinement in very ordinary men and hidden depths of something which you would not call refinement in women who might be described as sweet and nice. I think it would be fairer, I don't say better, though I really mean that, if we realized that Nature is capable of being very 'casual' where sex is concerned — that the mischievous old wonder-worker has, speaking roughly, only one set of emotions to deal out. A varied set, I grant you, but sexless."

"No. No." Once more Jack spoke violently. He stood up abruptly and walked to the railing that ran round the plateau. For several moments he leaned over and looked down at the sea. Then he came back. "You are wrong, Senator. I can't think that you have been speaking quite seriously, but if you really believe that the life of an average man would be possible to an average woman you are absolutely wrong. Individual women have been tempted beyond their strength. Women, in all ages, have been blinded by what you rather contemptuously call the grande passion, but all that is exceptional. I believe and know that women as a sex are filled with the conviction that 'Love is a sacrament that should be taken kneeling and Domine non

sum dignus should be on the lips and in the hearts of those who receive it." He spoke the, to him, familiar words very softly. The Senator looked at him sharply.

"Ah — Those are wonderful words. The finest, I think, that have ever been applied to Love. But — Helstan — have you forgotten that they were conceived by a man — not by a woman? They have come to us out of the depths, and they have come from a man who had indeed been 'casual' where passion was concerned?"

"I know. But that has nothing to do with it. Those words express love as it lives in the hearts of ninety-nine out of every hundred women."

There was silence.

Jack felt his heart beating violently. He was angry — and with a man he really liked.

The conversation had been impersonal, of course. And yet he felt as though a personal note had forced its way to the front. Suddenly the beating heart seemed to break down its barriers — it took wings and rustled softly away — away — into the heart of those blazing lights across the bay.

In the hush of the dark shadowy heights he seemed to hear again the gay soft voice—to see the wonderful eyes which were as the eyes of a confiding child.

A delicious thought came to him. She was there

close beside him — leaning towards him so that the perfume of white roses might steal into his brain.

He closed his eyes. Unconsciously he stretched out his hands.

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Mr. Willard spoke.

"I think we had better stroll back to the hotel. It begins to get very chilly."

Jack stared at him. The American smiled.

"I hope I have not seriously annoyed you?" he said gaily. "I admire and appreciate your fine ideas about women, never doubt that, but I have often thought that you, and writers like your friend Westland, go a long way towards making things difficult for them. It is very beautiful and poetic—this idea that they are all, naturally, angels, but it has its drawbacks. One expects so very much from a born angel."

Jack had recovered himself. He too smiled.

"Of course I'm not annoyed — there's nothing to be annoyed about, but certainly you've surprised me. I thought you were much too keen an observer of human nature to make a big mistake about women."

"You are quite convinced that what I have tried, very lamely, to express is a mistake?"

"Quite." Jack stood up and shook himself.

He looked big and determined. "It's a beastly idea — that of the female rake. Beastly and inexcusable."

"My dear fellow — who said anything about female rakes? I only suggested that there is a danger zone for men and women alike — without much, if any interference of the grande passion. I may be wrong in holding this theory — nevertheless I do hold it. And it is because of it that I find it very easy to overlook a slip, even several slips, in 'a mere woman' which would seem tragic in the case of an angel."

They were walking down a steep part of the hill. Jack offered his arm.

"Senator," he spoke gaily, "I believe you're a bit of a fraud. I think you've been trying to pull my leg. But all the same I'm glad to have an opportunity of declaring myself. I'm on the side of the angels — God bless them. Women like to be spoiled and admired, of course, but they know very well how to keep away from your 'danger zone'— in fact, most of them don't recognize its existence. They just want to have a bit of fun."

Senator Willard looked at the young man, and in his steadfast eyes there was admiration. It was very fine — this firm belief that women were a thing apart. Fine but — this was his conviction — dangerous.

He himself was an ardent feminist. He had many women friends whom he reverenced and admired, but it had never occurred to him to imagine that they were really unlike himself, either mentally or physically. He recognized that the circumstances, social circumstances for instance, which surrounded him were not quite similar to those which surrounded them, but that had nothing to do with fundamental likeness—or unlikeness? He was a man who had always looked facts in the face. And to him the fundamental likeness of men and women was a fact which refused to be denied.

#### CHAPTER VII

THE dance-teas at the Café de Paris were amazingly popular. Every one who was any one in the *monde*, or the smart *demi-monde*, went to them. Unless you secured a table well in advance you were pushed into a corner, or invited to lean against a pillar where hurrying waiters jostled your elbows and avoided, as if by the intervention of Providence, saturating your gown or coat with cocktails or maraschino or tea.

On this particular afternoon the big, glaringly brilliant restaurant under the blue minarets was packed. An extraordinary crowd: perfectly dressed Parisiennes of the highest social position; cheeky cabotines from Montmartre; distinguished-looking Englishwomen who seemed prepared to be shocked, just a little; New York belles, fresh and lovely, eager to see and to be seen; men of varied nationalities.

Every one was laughing and talking.

A half-hidden orchestra, directed by a palefaced man with burning eyes, was playing the last success in the Monte Carlo musical worldLe cri du corps. It was a languorous valse lente, and its success on the Riviera was largely due to the fact that its picture cover represented a lovely, very lightly clad woman who bore a strong likeness to "the famous Mrs. Bellew." People, Lady Granville amongst their number, declared that it was a portrait of Mrs. Bellew, and that she had given permission for its publication. Naturally enough the valse had a succès fou, and copies of it were eagerly demanded every afternoon from the chef d'orchestre, who was the proud composer.

Just at first Betty had been angry. Then she had laughed. The picture was like and yet unlike her. Of course, it was not a portrait, and — quoi faire?

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Lady Granville was sitting at a prominent table with Colonel Manners and the English girls who had been with her at the Hôtel de Paris the previous day. She was dressed in white and looking quite handsome. Close by, Sir Henry Chaplin was at a table with some men friends. In a quiet corner Mrs. Wainright was talking to Senator Willard. Twisted vases filled with daffodils stood on the small tables. The salle was full of golden light softened by cleverly arranged lamp-shades. There was a ceaseless

rustle of silken stuffs — a ceaseless whisper from restless feet clad in high-heeled shoes. The air teemed with excitement.

Le cri du corps seemed to die away — then suddenly it surged into amorous warmth. Paul Ourmansky leaned forward and said something to the lovely woman who was sitting at his table. She shook her head. Just then some of the dancers withdrew. It was possible to see across the crowded room. Betty's eyes wandered in the direction of the door. Her color rose.

She looked eager — then indignant.

An impudent-looking Arab boy was offering a copy of Le cri du corps to Jack Helstan, and he was looking intently at the picture cover. Betty felt convinced that he was thinking, suspecting, that it was her portrait.

How dared he think such a thing!

She sat quite still, staring at Jack and his companions—a quaint-looking elderly lady in a close-fitting bonnet of early-Victorian order, and a girl with an eager face, whose blue eyes were fixed adoringly—this was Betty's idea—on the face of the tall man who was looking at the piece of music.

Mrs. Ellerby stood still and watched the gay scene. She was a very dignified person: small and slight, with beautiful skin, and gray eyes

which seemed needlessly observant. She was daintily dressed, in a curiously old-world fashion. Her black silk gown was accompanied by a black velvet mantle, and a rim of parma violets lay close under the brim of her bonnet, against her smooth white hair, which was parted in the middle and brushed back over her ears. Over her sloping shoulders — which were as distinctly early-Victorian as her bonnet — she wore a sable scarf.

Kate Ellerby, her daughter, was a bright, fresh-looking girl, who was in reality not a "girl" at all, for she frankly admitted to "twenty-nine next birthday." But she gave an instant impression of youth. She was not a beauty. Her features were irregular and her mouth at least two sizes too large, but she was attractive because of the eager, friendly look in her wide-open eyes and the really lovely smile which never wandered far from her lips. For the rest, she was "quite too English for anything," to quote Lady Granville: English from the top of her head, crowned with nut-brown hair, to the heels of her wellmade, sensible walking shoes. She wore a nicely cut blue serge suit and a jaunty little hat, also blue, which had a crimson rose resting on the flat brim near the front. Her white chiffon blouse was of immaculate freshness and her white kid gloves were spotless. Kate was an enthusiastic

Church worker — her favorite brother being Dr. Helstan's curate - and she did not think it right to spend very much, at least not too much, on clothes; but she had saved up for this exciting Riviera trip, and she felt just a wee bit puffed up when, on looking round at the gorgeous crowd, she realized that her little ermine necktie was "quite correct" and that hardly any of these wonderful feminine butterflies carried fur muffs. The question of an ermine muff had troubled her more than a little. She had wanted one - that was certain. But ermine, at least the real thing — and Jack had a horror of imitations - was so expensive. She had priced the "sets" in half-a-dozen different shops. In fact, she had almost decided, just before Christmas, on buying a lovely flat thing lined with white satin which had cunning slits at the sides to admit one's hands. She had counted on a fairly generous Christmas check from Uncle Tom, her mother's only brother, and her heart had been filled with pride, for she did want to look nice on the Riviera. But just when the great moment came near one of her special girls, chief support of an invalid father, got thrown out of work, and then - well, the money was wanted. It was rather disappointing. Specially disappointing because Kate had more than once heard Jack Helstan say that ermine was his favorite fur. She had shed a tear or two in her own pink-and-white room in the dark, and it was really an immense relief to find that muffs, at least big ones, seemed out of favor at Monte Carlo. Hardly any of the exquisitely dressed women in this marvelous restaurant carried a muff!

Kate felt very happy.

This visit to the famous Café de Paris had been an event and rather an ordeal. Jack had suggested it because Mrs. Ellerby wished to "see everything while we're here," but Kate had heard a great deal about this special restaurant from friends who often wintered abroad, and she knew it was very "dressy." Now if there is one thing more disconcerting than another to a sensitive woman it is to go to a "dressy" restaurant overdressed or under-dressed. Her mother was a dear old lady who held decided views on the subject of dress, as on most other subjects. She had recommended a pretty taffetas gown, a regular afternoon affair, accompanied by a Sunday hat trimmed with black ostrich feathers. The taffetas gown was pretty, but Kate remembered something she had heard from Lady Conway, the wealthiest member of St. Luke's congregation: "Navy blue serge is always safe if it has been cut by the right man." Mrs. Ellerby had sniffed in her own

particular, really delightful way, but Kate had decided to be "safe." The serge suit she was wearing had been cut by a man who came, quite fairly, under the heading "good," and she mentally blessed Lady Conway when she eagerly scanned the crowded tables and realized that, so far as personal appearance was concerned, she was almost in the swim. A pretty color rose to her cheeks. Her blue eyes were brilliant when she smiled up at Jack Helstan, who had just succeeded in securing a table not far from the orchestra.

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Betty stared at the little group. She was sitting behind a pillar, and she knew that Jack Helstan had not seen her. All the same she was furious with him. What right had he to be there with those tiresome women?—friends, or at least acquaintances, of that "beast Alice Granville," for she had seen smiles of mutual recognition exchanged. Who were these people? That quaint old lady who was, in a way, so like her own sweet "little Mummy"? For a second a veil of tears fell before the beautiful, angry eyes. "Mummy" had been far more beautiful, but she also had worn little early-Victorian bonnets—she also had that wonderful, unmistakable look of dignified purity.

The old lady was charming! But that horrid girl

who was so obviously in love with him? Who was she? Where did she come from? Why was she with him?

Betty had brought a host of delicious thoughts with her to the Café de Paris. She had felt convinced that he would be there. She had made up her mind that she would, if possible, dance with him. Everybody danced everywhere at Monte Carlo—it was "quite correct," even for a clergyman's son. She had had a lovely little day-dream in which she had seen herself, felt herself, dancing with Jack Helstan! She wanted, wanted to be near him. And in such a crowd it would have been, as she had decided, "quite correct."

She was bitterly disappointed.

And her disappointment made her want to be cruel — to herself. She hated Paul Ourmansky to touch her. Instinctively she shrank from him — yet she turned to him and spoke. His eyes dilated. He smiled. At that moment the music grew very soft, it seemed to die away, but Prince Paul stood up and looked at the *chef d'orchestre*. Immediately the violins sang. There was a crash of 'cello and cymbalum, and then the haunting valse resumed its enervating career. Every one crowded to the front. There were whispers — eager voices — half-veiled jests.

Mrs. Bellew was going to dance!

Mrs. Wainright stood up and watched the proceedings through long-handled glasses. Senator Willard stood beside her. A moment before he had caught Helstan's eye and had waved his hand in salute.

Ourmansky led his partner into the middle of the space which had been left free for the dancers. For a second he stood quite still and looked at the lovely woman with the flower-like face. She was delicious in her clinging robe of dull rose silk. Her velvet toque made a somber, alluring frame for her creamy skin. She was delicious. Startlingly beautiful. Her cheeks were burning. There was a flame of excitement in her eyes.

For a second she stood quite still. Then she flung a defiant look in the direction of the tall man who had risen to his feet suddenly. He saw her now. She laughed. She swayed towards the man who was waiting for her and they glided slowly round the room.

People jeer at the phrase "poetry of motion," but Betty Bellew's dancing was just that. Her little feet hardly seemed to touch the ground. She seemed to float rather than dance, and the Russian proved himself a worthy partner. He held her close, and yet it seemed as though he was not holding her at all. Their bodies moved in perfect unison. Once when the music grew very

soft and seductive he loosed his hold and they danced alone, face to face, breast to breast, but without touching each other. The spectators followed every movement with breathless interest. Lady Granville alone, just before the music stopped, spoke aloud.

"The professionals may take a back seat after that! I suppose we shall hear of a grand-ducal 'turn' at some of the Paris music-halls before long."

Colonel Manners looked angry. The previous night he had been presented to the Russian prince at the Sporting Club, and he had his own reasons for wishing to pursue the acquaintance.

When Mrs. Bellew heard the familiar voice she suddenly stopped dancing. Her cheeks flamed—then the color died away. She looked tired. Without waiting for Ourmansky she walked back to her seat. As she made her way through the staring crowd Sir Henry Chaplin came to her side and said something in a low voice. He extended his hand; his wrinkled face was friendly. Betty glanced at him, bowed coldly and passed on. The old man returned to his friends, who began to chaff him loudly. He spoke sharply, and their laughter ceased. Betty, with deliberate intention, walked past the table which Helstan had secured for his friends. He was still standing.

His face was eager — his dark eyes full of question. As she approached he bowed and smiled. Betty glanced at him — then passed on. In that casual glance there was no recognition. Jack sank back into his chair. He felt as though some one had struck him on the face.

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Mrs. Ellerby was sitting up straight in her chair. Her lips were drawn into a thin, tight line. She looked indignant. Kate's face was flushed. She made a great effort to seem quite calm. Her hands trembled as she busied herself with the teacups. A horrible conviction came to her that she might cry at any moment. What did it mean?

What could it mean?

All through that dreadful dance she had watched Jack's face. She had seen his eyes following that wonderful figure in rose pink. She had seen the look of passionate admiration on the face she loved — oh, so dearly! Jack was in love with this woman! With the famous Mrs. Bellew whose photographs were in the shop windows at Mentone — and everywhere. He loved her — and she? She had pretended not to see him, pretended not to know him. Why? For certainly they knew each other — Kate had seen the look of mutual recognition when Mrs. Bellew began to dance.

What could be the meaning of it?

Kate hurriedly buttered her toast. She was thinking furiously, and her thoughts were horrible. What was that Lady Conway had said about "form at these foreign places"? Wasn't it something about the impropriety of a salute between a man and a woman when the woman — wasn't "quite the thing"? Yes — Lady Conway had said something like that, and she had been speaking of Monte Carlo. But then it was Jack who had bowed and Mrs. Bellew who had passed on!

Kate felt utterly miserable.

She wanted badly to say something in a natural tone to the man who was sitting so still by her side, but she could not speak. At that moment Lady Granville stood up. She came across the little passage left free for the waiters and spoke to Mrs. Ellerby.

"Delighted to see you here. Glorious weather, isn't it, for January! And the dancing — did you admire it?"

Her pale eyes were fixed on Jack Helstan's face. She found him attractive; otherwise she would not have taken the trouble to speak to "that funny little old woman." Jack had risen to his feet when she approached the table. His face was set and white.

Mrs. Ellerby pressed Lady Granville's hand.

"Thank you very much — yes, we are enjoying the beautiful weather — we are staying at Mentone. May I introduce my daughter and Mr. Helstan — the well-known writer?"

Lady Granville bowed and smiled. Her eyes still rested on the dark face of the silent man.

"Charmed. And the dancing? Come now, Mrs. Ellerby, give me your opinion. Wasn't it excellent? Quite up to the professional standard?"

The old lady drew herself up.

"I take it that it was professional dancing? The woman was, if I don't mistake, Mrs. Bellew, and the man was, I suppose, a professional from Paris?"

Lady Granville burst out laughing.

"Hush — sh — sh! He's sitting over there, and if he heard you we might all be knouted or crucified, or something gentle of that sort. My dear lady"— she bent down and spoke in a meaning whisper — "he's a Russian prince — fabulously rich and fabulously immoral! Oh, no, certainly he's not a professional — neither is Mrs. Betty Bellew — at least she's not a professional dancer!"

She looked at the man who had refused to return her ardent glances. There was a malicious expression in her eyes. Jack bit his lip. He made a sudden unconscious movement. Kate laid her hand on his arm. He looked down at her. Something in her piteous look made him smile. Softly he patted the pleading hand.

Lady Granville watched the little scene with obvious interest. She was still laughing. Suddenly she said, "Au revoir," and turned away.

Mrs. Ellerby looked after her. Then she pulled her fur scarf up about her neck.

"It's time to go, Jack. I think we have seen enough of this curious place."

Helstan bent his head. To save his life he could not have spoken naturally. Kate arranged her mother's scarf and veil, and then, love lending courage, she led the way a few steps in order that Mrs. Bellew's table might be avoided. Jack felt that he wanted to clap her on the back. What a "little brick" she was!

They wended their way, Jack now leading, between the mass of tables and chairs. They reached the entrance door. Just then the cheeky Arab boy again offered copies of *Le cri du corps*. In a moment of ungovernable rage Jack pushed him aside. Mrs. Ellerby caught the child's arm to steady him.

"My dear Jack, pray take care. The little boy is only doing his duty. I am surprised to find you so rough with a mere child."

Jack made no answer. At that moment he had

captured a glance from the loveliest eyes on God's earth. She had seen his "rough" conduct. She had appreciated it — he felt convinced of that. His face cleared. He smiled. Over there — across the room — Betty smiled, too. Then she looked down.

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When the *Cri du corps* came to an end Mrs. Wainright withdrew into her secluded corner. She looked puzzled and a little vexed. She had been keenly interested in what her impulsive friend Mrs. Childers had said about Mrs. Bellew. She had even made up her mind to try and become acquainted with the much-discussed beauty. But this public, sensational performance. It was a little too much.

Senator Willard, too, was disturbed. He was an observant man, and he had seen the look on Jack Helstan's face when Mrs. Bellew was dancing. That look was unmistakable. It expressed the most ardent admiration. He had seen Jack's salutation when the dance was over, and he had seen the manner in which Mrs. Bellew received it. He, like Kate Ellerby, was asking himself, "Why?" He felt disturbed.

The Helstans, father and son, had made a most agreeable impression on him. He felt that they were already his friends. It hurt him to think that there might be some secret entanglement

with such a dangerous woman as Mrs. Bellew. He sighed impatiently. Mrs. Wainright looked at him.

"We profess to believe in democracy, but a performance of that kind makes one realize that lines of demarcation are very desirable."

"Yes, I quite agree. But ——" He hesitated. "I suppose that lovely young woman really belongs to — all this?" He swept his hand round the crowded hall.

"She belongs because she wishes to belong. My friend Mrs. Childers told me a great deal about her the other day. She is a woman of good family. She ought not to be mixed up with these people."

"But any one may dance here—at least so I have been told. I should not wish a lady of my acquaintance to make herself so prominent, but then—Monte Carlo is Monte Carlo!"

"Yes." Mrs. Wainright looked stern. She was vexed with herself for having been weak. "Who was that tall dark man who has just gone out—with two English ladies? I saw you salute him, and I am quite curious to know his name. I have seen him at the Casino several times. A fine, strong face."

"Oh - John Helstan? That is the man who

wrote A Woman of To-morrow, you know. Don't you remember that I spoke of him and of his father the other day? I told you they were staying at my hotel."

"I remember. He is a remarkable-looking man. Very handsome, I think. I should like to make his acquaintance." She smiled. "A propos, I have it in my mind to ask for an invitation. Do you feel inclined to give a little dinner at the Bristol and to invite this wonderful father and son to meet me?"

Her manner was charming. Mr. Willard acquiesced with enthusiasm.

"Name the day, the happy day," he said. "Any day, or rather evening. Every day—every evening!"

"Thank you. I perceive you have not forgotten how to make nice speeches. What about next Thursday evening? At eight?"

"I shall count the hours until then."

### CHAPTER VIII

#### NIGHT

THAT evening Betty was restless—irritable. Her smart French maid, a little Parisienne who in early youth had made something of a success in the cabarets of Montmartre, found her "impossible."

Marie was sufficiently shrewd. She scented what she would have called, for her English was delicious, "a disturbance of the heart." She was very patient but ceaselessly observant. Marie was not a specially scrupulous individual — in fact, in certain and various circumstances she was not scrupulous at all, but she was really attached to her mistress. She liked her almost, but not quite, as well as the steady flow of bank-notes which had lately found their way to her pocket from a Russian source. Quite honestly she felt that Prince Paul had been sent by Providence. He was ideal. "Madame was still young — but quite young — mais, tout de même?"

When Betty, more or less satisfied after at least

six different gowns had been put on and off, at last went down to dinner, Marie drew a long breath and threw herself into a chair. What next? Mon dieu? She was charming - but charming -Madame Bellew. But what did it all mean? She drew out of an inner pocket a little thin notebook in which she carefully jotted down outgoings and incomings. All had been going so well. If things continued in this way long enough she might look forward to a comfortable old age. She might even arrive at being that most enviable of all human creatures, une rentière. She banged her fist against the table impatiently. A silver frame fell down. She picked it up. Before replacing it on the table she looked hard at the photograph within. It was a print, very clear and soft, which had been cut from an English illustrated paper. The picture of a man with magnetic eyes and a determined chin. The eyes seemed to look at her steadily: the firm mouth seemed to smile.

Marie's face grew very hard. She knew something about this picture—quite a great deal. She had often seen it on a table in the adjoining bedroom when she took in the petit déjeuner, and photographs cannot walk. She had asked "Monsieur Pierre," the magnificent individual who had command of Prince Ourmansky's suite,

if he knew anything about this new-comer: she had taken an opportunity when her mistress was at the Casino to show the major-domo the picture. And "Monsieur Pierre" had scoffingly replied that he believed "the person wrote for the papers."

It was positively wicked. One may tempt Providence once too often. Marie recalled a personal experience of the beautiful cabaret days, when she had been une petite diable with shapely limbs and audacious eyes. That special gift of Providence had not been attractive - not a bit like Prince Paul, who was joli garçon as well as fabulously rich — but there had been money in the affair and she had been stupid - idiotic. And all because she had believed that she "had the time "- all because she had found a certain young Englishman, whom she had been proud to call "Mon cher Capitaine," adorable. For a moment Marie held the pictured face of "the person who wrote for the papers" between her vicious fingers. She longed to pull it out of the heavy silver frame and to tear it into tiny pieces, but she did not dare. "Madame" was exquisite. "Un véritable ange" - when she was pleased. But "Madame" had a temper.

Marie put down the frame with a bang.

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Betty could not sleep. She had not gone to the

Casino. She had not looked in at the Sporting Club. She had remained in her own little *salon* which overlooked the sea.

All through the long evening and far into the night she had thought of the happenings of the afternoon.

Who were those people? That quaint old lady who looked so like and yet so unlike her own dead mother? That girl with the openly adoring eyes and exaggeratedly English clothes? Who were they? What were they to him? She was in the shadows, for the nightlight which Marie had carefully arranged was shrouded in pale silk. She sat up in bed and pressed her hands to her eyes. She was very tired but adorably pretty. Her hair was arranged in two long plaits tied at the ends with rose-colored ribbons. There was a foam of lace at her throat and on the short sleeves of her nightdress. She looked like a girl of eighteen.

Juliet in real life, with a string of milk-white pearls, large and full of subdued luster, circling her throat. Betty loved jewels. Diamonds — opals — pearls. All the white and pale tinted stones. But her passion was for pearls.

Unconsciously she touched the great white beads.

Her fingers tightened convulsively.

That string of white beads had been given to her by "Gerry" Mansergh.

How well she remembered that wonderful Christmas. London had been covered with snow. There had been skating on the big lake at Granville Park, near Richmond.

She had had a *succès fou* in white furs — white velvet — creamy white pearls.

Dear old Gerry — he had not been rich as money is counted in the Guards, but he had been lavishly generous where she was concerned. Nothing that money could buy was good enough for her in his opinion. He had chosen the very best pearls he could secure in order that her white throat might not drive the beads "sick with envy." How well she remembered the loving words — the look in his adoring eyes as he spoke them.

And what a string of lies she had had to tell about that lovely necklace!

"Clever man in Paris who understood the art of 'reconstituting' big white beads from oyster shells." She had told that story many times; and some people had believed it and had begged for the address. As for the others? Well, they had had, most probably, strong suspicions, but "suspicions" don't matter very much. Her husband had accepted the story, so it had been all right.

Betty's fingers twisted in and out round the string, nervously. She loved them. But at that moment she found herself wishing passionately that she had never seen them — never seen those other costly ornaments which lay on her dressing-table and in her jewel-case.

If only she could go right back to the dear old days, tiresome days in many ways, when her most valuable treasure had been a heart-shaped locket made of filigree silver, suspended from a fragile silver chain. When her best, almost only, party frock had been made of white washing muslin — when the purchase of a long pair of white kid evening gloves was an important event — when "shoes to match" could not have been secured unless "things had improved" with regard to the income of rents. They had been desperately hard up at Castle Martin. A chronic case of stony-broke.

But there had been oceans of love and protecting care. She had been surrounded by admiration—delicious home admiration.

The old servants, who were proud to serve "the master's family" even though wages had reached a stage in which they hardly deserved mention, had openly adored "Miss Betty." To them she had been as a little Queen. Not one man or woman amongst them would have hesitated about

"bateing the life out of" any one who had dared to insult or annoy her. They had been so proud of her—all those dear simple souls. On her wedding day the elm avenue leading to the little church had been strewn with white flowers. The village children had joined their elders in giving voice to shrill shouts of triumph when she and Lance Bellew stepped into the shabby old carriage—the only one left in a great coach-house which had once held a dozen and more. It had been gay—delightful.

Even Lance, ever ready to ridicule Irish ways, had found it "all right." Even he had been touched by the loving vehemence of the old retainers who stood in line to wish "Miss Betty" God-speed when the moment came for her to leave the old home.

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Her eyes were full of tears.

What had brought it all back so vividly?

What had made her think of those days — to-night?

A certain elusive look in a man's dark eyes.

A look which in some strange way had made her wish, with all her strength, that she had the power to "begin again." He had seemed to have such confidence in her. His manner had been so full of natural respect. And yet—he must know.

But did he know - really?

Betty drew up her knees and rested her arms on them. Her cheeks were burning. Her eyes were fixed on a pictured face in a broad silver frame.

Through the open window came a gust of strong sea air. It stirred the little curls that clung to her forehead. It invigorated her like a glass of sparkling wine.

There was silence everywhere. Mysterious silence which knew nothing of loneliness, for it teemed with possibilities.

Betty stretched out her hand and laid it against the cold glass of the picture-frame. There was passion in the gesture — and something like fury.

How stupid she had been. How utterly foolish. What a failure she had made of her life.

The fingers of her other hand were still tangled in the string of pearls.

What memories they awoke.

The first really valuable present she had accepted from a man who was not a near relation.

The first — lover.

The first serious deceit.

The first real sin.

She had always been frivolous and vain and fond of admiration, but she had been brought up amongst

people who were "straight all through." The Beresford men had been soldiers or sailors or country gentlemen for centuries back. The Beresford women had been noted beauties and admirable as wives and mothers. Her own darling little "Mummy" had never, in all probability, known a woman in her own station of life who had "a lover" in the Continental sense of the word. Such things did not rank amongst the possibilities of Irish county circles in those days.

There had been plenty of fun. Hunting—dancing—fishing "galore." Flirtations by the dozen—a ceaseless chorus of admiration and appreciation, but everything "straight all through."

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She lay back against the pillows. Her cheeks flamed. Life, even from the very first, with Lance Bellew had been a liberal education.

She had been an ignorant little fool.

It had amused him to give her lessons in the realities of "life behind the scenes"—in Paris and then, later on, in London.

He had, in his own words, put her up to a thing or two. He had with eager hands torn aside the veil of ignorance which had so sheltered her. He had laughed openly at her girlish ideas—and ideals.

After six months of married life she had been

able to "hold her own and a bit over" in the fastest set in London. She still looked like a little white angel, but she "knew her way about."

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Betty suddenly covered her face in her hands.

Another memory — heartbreaking — horrible — forced itself on her. The memory of a badly written letter containing a post-office order for twenty pounds which had reached her after her divorce — from Ireland — from Ballinagarry, her home village. The letter was signed "your faithful old Bridget," and it had been written by a servant who had grown old in the service of "little Mummy."

How well she remembered the day she received that letter — that humble, apologetic offer of help to "darling Miss Betty," for Bridget never seemed to remember the married name. Betty's eyes filled and overflowed when she thought of the day that letter had arrived. She had been miserable — defiant — sullen — furious. She had been hard. And old Bridget's twenty pounds had broken down the wall of defiance. She had cried for hours. Cried as though she could never stop.

The shame of it. The nobility. The love. The awful stab.

Bridget — whose wages had been so small and, at the end, so irregularly paid.

Bridget — who had never been able to lay by for

"a rainy day"— who had given all that was best in her to her beloved "Master and Mistress."

Bridget!

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Betty took up the framed picture and stared down into the magnetic eyes. They seemed to reproach her. Very softly she kissed them. Still they reproached her—just as the real eyes had done when he was passing out of the Café de Paris.

Hot tears dropped on the pictured face.

Suddenly she turned out the electric light and drew the bedclothes up round her shoulders. Her burning face was pressed hard against the pillows. The wet glass which covered the picture seemed to cool the fever in her cheeks.

#### DAY

The following morning was glorious. Warm as a day in May and full of sunshine.

Betty had felt certain that she could not sleep, and yet she had slept — soundly.

She awoke refreshed, even gay. She felt, somehow, happy. Hers was a mercurial nature. Up—down—trembling half way—rarely quite steady. She was the slave of impulse. At times a willing slave; but, willing or unwilling, still in bondage.

As she sipped her chocolate and skimmed the

newspapers she became obsessed with the idea that she was en veine. This was surely going to be a good day. "Something lovely" was going to happen.

Several plans presented themselves to her mental vision, only to be dismissed. Then she thought of a modest excursion! She would go over to Nice early in the afternoon and order some frocks. Then she would come back and win a fortune at the Casino between 5 and 7—her lucky hours.

Yes — she would go to Nice — alone — and in the tramway.

She smiled as she thought of the dusty, shaky tram which skirted the sea all the way to Nice. It was a funny way to go when Ourmansky's big cars had been placed at her disposal. But then the dusty tram had its own attractions. It passed, quite slowly, before the entrance of the Hôtel Bristol. There was, in fact, a stopping-point there. And the people staying at the Bristol were almost always out on the Boulevard looking at the hydro-aeroplanes which lived in that quarter. Something might happen. You never can tell.'

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Once again Betty was hard to please. Marie knew that Prince Ourmansky was shooting for a

big prize at the Tir aux Pigeons, and she brought forward an amazingly chic costume of white cloth and silver braid. Betty rejected it at once. She went herself to the big wardrobe, which lined one side of her dressing-room, and selected a little tailored suit in dark blue serge. It looked simple enough for a jeune fille, but it had been designed by a famous Paris artist. Any woman who had the entrée to the ateliers in the rue de la Paix would have known that it was "a little nothing" which had cost more than a thousand francs. At her breast there were soft laces, and she wore, pressed down on her sunny hair, a flat-brimmed hat with a rose in front which was just a little like the hat Kate Ellerby had worn the day before at the Café de Paris. It was like and yet unlike just as the two navy blue serge suits were like and unlike.

Betty was not perfect. Far from that.

The memory of that other, eminently refined blue suit lent brightness to her mischievous eyes. She laughed outright as she glanced down at her little patent leather shoes with their Cuban heels and cutsteel buckles.

People were rather fond of saying — she remembered that in the old days —"blue serge is always blue serge." Well — it wasn't true.

The blue serge of the rue de la Paix had not been

a bowing acquaintance with the material of the same name which lives in big "Emporiums."

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There had been no one special at the halt in front of the Hôtel Bristol. It had been just a wee bit disappointing, but she did not mind—much.

She was still feeling radiant and elated when the jolting cars pulled up: when it was necessary to get out.

But as she strolled down the crowded street where every one seemed to be talking and laughing with some one else she began to feel lonely. She had been stupid. It would have been quite easy, and not really outrageous, to send off a petit bleu. Just a few words — not even a signature. It would have been such fun, and he would not have been at all shocked. Yes - certainly she had been stupid. A lovely, glorious afternoon wasted, for the dressmaking people would have been only too glad to send over models and patterns and everything necessary. She glanced into the windows. Once she stopped and looked intently at some silver matchboxes of novel design. She felt tempted to go in and buy one of them. Then the ever-ready color rose to her cheeks and she turned away.

At last she reached the "Maison" which bore

a world-famous name, but she was in no hurry to go in. At Nice show-windows are the fashion, and even this exclusive establishment permitted itself to display some of its lovely things. Magnificent sables and lengths of priceless lace were thrown together in studied confusion. At one corner a branch of orchids lay against the white floor.

Betty stood and looked at the furs and laces, but she was not thinking of them. Her thoughts were with that *petit bleu* which she had not sent.

People passed along behind her — talking, laughing, flirting. Nice was enjoying a brilliant season. There was gaiety in the air. Suddenly she became conscious that some one was standing still behind her. She looked into the big mirror at the back of the show-window. The intruder was looking intently into the same mirror. Two pairs of ardent eyes smiled. Betty stretched out her hand without turning round. It was captured.

"Are you interested in sables and lace which cost heaven knows how much a yard?"

"I'm interested in this shop-window. Why did you do it? How had I offended you?"

They were still staring into the big mirror. Helstan had forgotten to set loose the captured hand. Betty smiled. Then she laughed softly.

"Are you mad with me? — that's real Irish, you know."

"Furious. But — why?"

She gave his hand a little pinch and drew away her fingers.

"Because — oh, never mind. I can't explain, and it doesn't matter — now." She turned and faced him. "Let's go in and choose frocks — I'm certain you've excellent taste."

Jack nodded and held open the white door. Madame Rachel, the chief vendeuse, hurried forward. Mrs. Bellew was, especially this season, a very important customer. All the world was talking about Prince Ourmansky's devotion to her and he was rich—"oh, la, la." Mrs. Bellew nodded carelessly and passed on to an inner, oval room which was brilliantly lighted with electric lamps.

"Evening gowns," she said. "Not too elaborate. For the Casino or restaurant dinners." One of the assistants pushed forward big arm-chairs covered with old rose brocade. They sat down. Jack was still smiling. He did not seem in the least disturbed by his unusual surroundings. Betty glanced at him.

"Sure it doesn't bore you? Very often men have tremendously useful ideas about dress."

"I like it."

Madame Rachel, who had issued orders to the

manequins in an adjoining room, looked at him sharply. She could not quite place him, but she had spent a good deal of time in London. She saw at once that his tailor was a man who knew his business. Mrs. Bellew exchanged a few remarks with her. Then, at the other end of the room, a curtain was drawn back and a pretty girl walked forward, slowly. She took very small steps and her hips swayed with evident intention. She was powdered and rouged. Her big eyes were framed in lashes which had been generously touched with kohl. Her finger-nails shone like shells of a highly artificial order. She was supremely self-conscious, and she wore a "creation" made of japonica-pink chiffon, silver embroideries and masses of dazzling fringe. Betty looked at the dress. Then she turned to Jack and said -

"What do you think?"

"For the Casino?"

"Or the Sporting Club?"

He was silent. The pretty manequin had naturally white skin which had been made marble-like by generous coatings of liquid powder. The amount of material used in the corsage would not have covered a medium-sized doll. Betty reddened.

"I don't care for it," she said. "I've seen something very like it. Please show me some really new and original models."

Madame Rachel waved the manequin away. Once more she looked at the man in the big arm-chair. Her lips tightened. Jack leaned forward.

"Don't you like white dresses? White lace — or that soft white muslin stuff?"

The vendeuse looked openly contemptuous.

"White lace. Madame is not looking for a wed-ding-dress — I imagine!"

Mrs. Bellew looked at her sharply.

"I am very fond of white — let me see what you have."

Madame Rachel said something rapidly in French. Betty hesitated. Jack broke in.

"Why not, madame? Surely Mrs. Bellew's coloring calls for white dresses and white furs?" He spoke French without a trace of English accent. Betty looked surprised. The *vendeuse* became suddenly obsequious.

"Monsieur has reason"— she also spoke her beloved language —" much reason. I have something that will delight him — Madame also. A veritable chef-d'œuvre."

She disappeared behind the curtain. Betty turned to Jack.

"How extraordinarily well you speak French. Where did you learn?"

"After I left college I spent three years in Paris.

At that time I had an idea of taking up painting as a profession."

"You are a painter?"

He made a grimace. She stared — then laughed. The situation gave her pure delight. Here he was, helping her to choose frocks, and yet, in any ordinary sense, they were strangers. She felt radiant.

Madame Rachel had returned. She was pretending to arrange some furs which were thrown on a table near the curtain, but she was watching her client and making mental calculations. This "monsieur" was attractive. He was even "chic" and spoke French like an angel, but — who was he? And was he going to interfere with "the affair Ourmansky"? She was a business woman. Mrs. Bellew was very lovely, but she was not of those who could be trusted to make things secure financially.

The velvet curtain was once more drawn back and a manequin, younger and fresher than the other, walked slowly into the room. She was gowned in purest white. A bewildering garment made up of fragile lace and Indian muslin with clever touches of silver and crystal here and there. Jack sat forward and looked at the dress. Betty looked at him — so did Madame Rachel.

"That's lovely," he said. "At least, I think

so. Don't you like it, Mrs. Bellew? It looks rather like a girl's coming-out frock, but I'm sure it would suit you to perfection."

Betty's dimples popped out. She was so pleased that she felt shy. She sat quite still. Madame Rachel's eyes narrowed.

"A poem — Monsieur, n'est-ce pas?" Jack nodded.

"Don't you like it, Mrs. Bellew?"

" Yes."

He looked at her. Something in her face made his heart beat violently. He got up and came to her side. Betty looked at him. She stretched out her hands.

"These chairs are very comfy, but it's impossible to get out of them gracefully. Will you help me—please?"

### CHAPTER IX

A S they strolled down the street, Jack pulled out his watch.

"It's rather early, but not too early, I think. Where shall we have tea? Do you want to listen to a band, or — shall we talk?"

"Not a bit too early, and 'talk' - please."

They were passing the English Tea Rooms just then. Jack looked in and saw that the place was almost empty. He turned to Betty.

"Will this do? I don't think it's specially smart, but I know the muffins are good."

"Beautifully. I've been here before. I like it."

Jack made a noble pretense of looking for a comfortable corner. Then he led the way upstairs to the picturesque room on the first floor. He felt pretty certain that the lower salon would fill first.

The "rose room" on the first floor was quite empty. They selected a corner near a low window, and Betty threw aside her sable scarf and muff. She nestled back in the depths of a roomy chair.

Jack gave an order: then he pulled his chair close to hers.

- "And now please tell me 'why'?"
- "Why what?"
- "Why you deliberately cut me yesterday afternoon."
- "I didn't. That's to say we didn't really know each other, and you were with friends."
- "We did really know each other, and what had the 'friends' to do with it? I wanted, if I had dared, before you cut me, of course, to introduce them to you. The old lady, Mrs. Ellerby, is a darling, and I've known her daughter all my life."

Betty looked at him suddenly. She seemed about to speak. Then she looked down. It was quite a moment before she asked—

- "Are they relations?"
- "No. Just very old friends. Mrs. Ellerby's second son is my father's curate a first-rate fellow. The other son is rather famous. He's a V.C. man, and one of the best."
- "Yes." Betty's voice sounded strange. "Do you mean Major Ellerby of the Black Watch?"

Jack looked eager.

- "That's the man. Do you know him?"
- "No. I've heard some one speak of him I don't remember whom it was."

Her face was slightly flushed. She pretended to have some difficulty in pulling off her long gloves. It was horrible to realize that Ronald Ellerby of the Black Watch had been one of Gerald Mansergh's friends. Jack leaned forward and softly drew off the rebellious gloves.

"Are you going to tell me 'why'?" he said.
"Or shall we bury that disagreeable episode without honors?"

She looked up. He was amazed to see that her eyes were full of tears. For a moment they looked at each other. Then he caught her hands and pressed them.

"Never mind. It's all right - now."

She tried to release her hands, and in doing so her little hand-bag fell to the ground. He picked it up and looked at it admiringly.

"How well they make these things." He stopped short and stared at the name on the corner, in curved silver letters. "Betty'? Is that your name? 'Betty'! It's lovely. Just right. Exactly like you."

She smiled.

"Think so? What is Miss Ellerby's name? I suppose you are going to marry her?"

"Marry her? Dear little Kate Ellerby? Not likely! Why, we used to go to school together, though, of course, she's younger than I am. She's

a real good pal, but marry—?" He laughed right out. "What put that idea into your head?"

"I don't know. I thought you looked rather like engaged people. At least, I thought that she——"

"Looked 'engaged'? What sort of a look is that?"

"Oh — interested — you know quite well what I mean."

He shook his head.

"I wonder." He stopped short and looked at her: the ardent look she loved was in his eyes. "I wonder what you looked like when you were engaged?"

"I? But that was ages — ages ago."

"About how many 'ages'? I don't apologize for an indiscretion, for it's obvious that you can't mind speaking of your age."

Betty sat up very straight. She folded her hands demurely.

"Please, sir, eleven long years have passed since I was married. And on my wedding-day I was seventeen!"

"Just a little kiddy-girl — seventeen?" He drew a long breath. For a moment he was silent. Then he added, "Yesterday was my birthday — I was twenty-eight, so we're nearly the same age, though I look years older than you do."

"Oh, la, la! What a fib! You look twentytwo and act like eighteen! But it's really rather funny that we should be the same age?"

"I think it's splendid, but no change of subject — please. Tell me something about how you looked and felt when you were — seventeen?"

"You mean, when I was married?" She smiled mischievously, then grew suddenly grave. "I was ridiculously young, for one thing—and outrageously ignorant of things—as things are in reality. I had never been out of Ireland—never been anywhere—never seen anything."

"You were very much in love - of course?"

Jack looked down as he spoke. He was eager to know, but hated to seem intrusive. Betty glanced at him sharply. There were hard lines about her mouth. Then her face cleared.

"Oh — as for that — yes, I suppose so. Lance was rather nice in those days."

"He died - long ago?"

He was still looking down, but his face was disturbed, strongly excited. Betty was silent. She was puzzled. Jack looked at her.

"Are you vexed? Of course, I've no right to ask so many questions, but I do so want to know—about you."

"But you said you knew all about me — the other day?"

He laughed.

"That was general knowledge. The sort of knowledge that all the world possesses. What I want is a little private information—if you don't mind giving it."

She still looked puzzled, but a lovely smile stole across her face.

"You're a most insistent person. Well—here goes. I was married when I was seventeen. My boy was born when I was eighteen and a half. My husband died when I was twenty-four, and—here I am."

"You have a child — a little son?"

"I had."

She bent her head suddenly. Jack stretched out his hand and gently laid it on one of hers. In his eyes there was vehement admiration and pity and — something else. Betty glanced up. Her soft cheeks were flushed. Just then a trim waitress brought in the tea-tray. She arranged it carefully, all the time looking furtively from one face to the other. She lingered over her task. At last she withdrew, closing the door softly behind her. For several minutes there was silence. Jack added a big spoonful of whipped cream to Betty's chocolate, and arranged her muffin to his satisfaction. At last he spoke.

"Were you married in white satin?"

She looked at him, amazed.

"Why?" She shook her head, smiling. "No! I remember I was very keen on wearing a gorgeous white satin dress, but Mummy had the dearest old-fashioned ideas about girls' frocks. She insisted on fine Indian muslin trimmed with the lace she had had on her own wedding-dress. It was really rather quaint and sweet — rather like ——"

"The dress you have just ordered chez Puteaux? I was certain of that! At least, I knew that was just the right sort of wedding-dress for you."

"You're a connoisseur in women's clothes?"

"You're poking fun at me, but, yes—I rather think I am. At least, I know what I like, and, naturally, I think that what I like is just right." He was laughing. Then he became serious. "My own mother was married in some stuff like white muslin. I don't remember her at all, because she died when I was a baby, but my father preserves her wedding-dress in the old oak chest which held her trousseau. He showed it to me—once. On my twenty-first birthday."

"Yes?" Betty drank her chocolate in feverish haste. She was trembling. To hide her emotion she helped herself to some of the fancy cakes which were piled up on a dish. Then for the first time she noticed that her plate was full of muffin. She laughed nervously. "You'll think you're

entertaining a very greedy person?" She stopped, then added, quite naturally, "Your father is often at the Casino. Does he find it interesting?"

"I thought you told me you had his dossier by heart? He is going to write a book on the little ways of the Casino, and he's a tremendous stickler for personal observation."

"He seems out of place in the dear old Kingdom of Democracy — that's what the painter Chalifert calls Monte Carlo. He insists that there, and there alone, men and women, all men and women, are equal."

"Very much too 'equal,' I think." He spoke vehemently. Betty raised her eyebrows.

"I thought you preached Liberty, Equality and Fraternity? In your books you are always saying something of that sort?"

"In the true sense — yes. But the Liberty, Equality and Fraternity of Monte Carlo is disgusting. Outrageous."

Betty's surprise was obvious. For a second or two Jack sat and looked at her. He wanted to say something, and yet he was afraid of giving offense. She was so extraordinarily young in spite of her twenty-eight years. So, in a way, unsophisticated. He was reminded of words he had read that morning in a favorite novel: "Woman, as she ought to be in the life of a man — something exquisite, deli-

cate, ethereal, touchingly fascinating, protected and held by strength." He had thought of her when he read the words. Now he was looking at her and realizing their truth. She was just that—"something exquisite, delicate, ethereal, touchingly fascinating." And what she needed was to be "protected and held by strength."

"I don't understand?" Betty was looking at him inquiringly. He hastened to reply.

"Of course you don't, but what I say is true for all that. Look here — I don't want to be cheeky, but I do so wish I could make you see that it's all wrong — this horrible system of equality between men and women who should never meet. It's all wrong that low beasts, men in name only, should be able to hob-nob with refined women — with you, for example, at the roulette tables — that women who ought never to enter your presence should be able to sit beside you — jammed up close — borrowing your rake, asking to see your notes."

He was strongly excited. The veins in his forehead stood out. His jaw and chin seemed hard as iron. Betty looked at him with dilated eyes. She was very pale, but the windows were shrouded in lace. Her pallor passed unnoticed.

"You will think I am speaking strongly, but I assure you I feel strongly about this thing. Yester-day afternoon the outrageous side of it was driven

home - at the Café de Paris. You in your innocence, and because of your lovely gay nature, felt it to be the right thing to dance there, but it was absolutely and utterly wrong. You were surrounded by the most questionable people - by men who have nothing better to do in life than to track down pretty women - men who don't care what they say or insinuate about women, even the purest and loveliest. You were like an exquisite lily standing alone in a wilderness of artificial flowers. You were as much out of place there as an angel from Heaven would be in a Paris cabaret, and yet - you seemed unconscious of the horror. The spirit of Monte Carlo Democracy had blinded you - just as it blinds every one who stays there long enough. I often heard of this danger from my friend Bernard Westland, who knows the place well, but I never believed it until yesterday."

Betty sat quite still. Her face was white as the lily to which she had just been compared. There was a frightened look in her golden-brown eyes. She did not even try to speak. Helstan was quivering with excitement. He pushed the table aside and caught her hands.

"Forgive me — please. I know I've no right to say all this, but the thing has caught hold of me — the horror of it, I mean. Yesterday afternoon I wanted more than I ever wanted anything in my life

wanted to have the right to carry you away. I was ashamed of having been induced to take Mrs. Ellerby and her daughter there. You can imagine how I felt about you — how I felt when that young brute of an Arab had the infernal audacity to point to you when he offered me that music. I saw red, I can tell you. It was all I could do to keep my hands off the scoundrel — I wanted to strangle him."

"But every one goes to the Café de Paris?" Betty's voice sounded far away. Jack's fingers tightened on her hands.

"That's just it. 'Every one' goes. And where 'every one' goes you ought not to go. These foreign chaps, even the best of them, have one great fault—they don't know how to distinguish one woman from another. La femme is la femme to every Frenchman I've ever met, and she's always fair game if she happens to be attractive!" He stopped suddenly. His burning eyes devoured her face. For the first time he noticed its extreme pallor. His voice grew very soft. "Tell me—how does it happen that your people allow you to run about down here—alone? Are you so completely a 'New Woman' that you refuse to obey the voice of wise male relatives or friends?"

"My 'people'?" Betty stared at him. "What do you mean by 'people'?"

He laughed.

"Why, your relations! Or, if you have come to see that relations are capable of being immense bores — your intimate friends? I shouldn't like to make you conceited, but you really are too sweet and lovely to be mixed up, even in appearance, with the herd at the Casino — of the Café de Paris."

"But there are what you would call 'objectionable women' everywhere — in Paris — in London — in every restaurant?"

"Yes. But I wasn't really thinking of the poor women who have been forced to choose a horrible profession. One can find plenty of excuses for them, though it isn't right that they should brush their skirts against you. I was thinking of the true Monte Carlo type — the woman who might be called a semi-demi-mondaine. These creatures wear something like a cloak of respectability, and that's what makes them so dangerous. They're rotten to the core, but no one can say that they make an open profession of evil living. They live at the best hotels, surrounded by their men 'friends'-they cover themselves with gorgeous jewels - have prominent boxes at the fashionable theaters — dance at the smart restaurants! They're all-pervading on the Riviera - especially at Monte Carlo. That's why I do so hate to see you going about alone without women friends, I mean."

"Stop!" Betty spoke the single word very loudly. She was almost unconscious that she had spoken it at all. Her face was white. In her eyes there was terror. She was trembling. Jack stared at her.

"I am sorry," he said. "I've frightened you—it was unpardonable, but—please—please—forgive."

"What do you know about me?" Her voice trembled. "You said you knew 'all about me'— what did you mean by that?"

His face cleared.

"Just that you are the sweetest and loveliest woman I have ever seen!"

"You don't know anything about me? You have not asked any one about me?"

"Mrs. Bellew! What do you take me for? Do you suppose that I've gone round collecting notes for your dossier?" He smiled. His thoughts fled back to that wonderful evening on the Terrace when she had said, "But every croupier in Monte Carlo has your dossier." He drew his chair nearer. Betty shrank back.

"You really know nothing about me?"

"What is there to 'know'? Have you murdered any one? Or cheated at roulette, or forged your favorite uncle's name?"

He was laughing. Betty stared at him.

"I thought you knew everything. Every one else seems to know, and then — I saw Alice Granville speaking to your friends — and to you."

"Lady Granville? Do you know her? I never met her until yesterday, but I think she and the Ellerbys are on visiting terms."

"Alice Granville was my chief bridesmaid—when I was married in that white muslin dress." Her lips trembled, but she hurried on. "She wouldn't touch me with a tongs now, because I made a regular mess of things. I was divorced—badly—so badly that they wouldn't even let me see my boy, and since then——"There were sobs in her throat. One by one big tears rolled down her face. "Major Ellerby—you spoke of him just now—was an intimate friend of the man who—who was in my divorce—the man who was shot by my husband."

## "My God — not Ourmansky?"

The strange, abrupt question seemed driven from his lips. He stared at her. She, hypnotized, stared back. For a moment that seemed like an hour, there was silence. Then Betty spoke a single word.

" No."

His hands shook convulsively. The cruel tension of his fingers relaxed. He stood up — drawing her

up with him. They stood face to face. Betty made no attempt to conceal her tears.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I thought you knew ——"

"I love you." He spoke violently. "I love you—"

He caught her in his arms and crushed her against his breast. He bent his head.

Suddenly, before that almost certain meeting of lips, he drew back and loosed her hands. She sank into the chair and covered her face. He said something — what it was she never knew. A moment later the door opened — and closed.

She was alone.

### CHAPTER X

IT was close on midnight.

Jack Helstan was alone in his room.

Senator Willard had had a guest, an old friend from one of the Southern States, and he had pressed Jack to make a third at his table. It had been impossible to refuse because Dr. Helstan had a sore throat and was remaining in his own room that evening.

A nightmare dinner.

The visitor, a genial rollicking "sport," knew Monte Carlo inside out. He had the gossip of the Casino and Cafés on the tip of his tireless tongue. Before the evening was over Jack was on intimate terms with Mrs. Bellew's dossier.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

He was sitting by an open window.

On the Boulevard de la Condamine there was silence. But the bay looked festive. It was framed in twinkling lights.

A big liner was expected.

Jack lit a cigar. For a moment he smoked it vehemently. Then he laid it down and forgot it.

How calm the night seemed. Unnaturally calm! Stars hung low in the sky. The atmosphere was clear.

He pulled his chair forward and leaned his arms on the window-sill.

He must think it all out.

He had acted like a madman. He had insulted her. Only by the merest accident had he been saved from a ridiculous situation.

He forced himself to review the happenings of the afternoon.

That terrible moment in the tea-room.

Her broken pitiful words which rang so true. Which, thanks to that damned scoundrel Hamilton Clark, he now knew to be true.

With a violent gesture he flung the window wider open.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

They must have taken him for a lunatic — those nice girls at the English Tea-Room. He had rushed down the stairs and made straight for the street without thinking of anything but his own amazed horror.

One of the girls — it was the one who had closed the door of the upper room so softly — had touched his arm and said something.

When Jack recalled that humiliating moment he

felt inclined to burst out laughing: but there were tears in his eyes.

He had forgotten to pay the bill!

Hurriedly he had thrust a gold piece into the girl's hand, but that was not all. She asked him something about "how many cakes?"

He remembered how he had stared at her and laughed.

He remembered the girl's amazed look — how she had turned towards the staircase. She had intended to go up and count! or to ask — Betty!

His face flamed when he recalled the ridiculous scene. He had insisted in a loud unnatural voice that they had eaten "all the cakes"—he had dropped the change which had been so carefully counted into his hand—he had at last flung open the door and escaped.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

He leaned his head on his hands and tried to think.

It seemed incredible — utterly impossible. And yet it was true. Not all of it — at least not all that garrulous beast had recounted. But enough.

Demons had been working within him, secretly. At first he had been too much amazed to realize his own feelings. But just then, suddenly, a flame of furious jealousy broke loose.

Her divorce.

The reason for it. Ample reason if half Hamilton Clark's story was true.

She had loved that other man. Loved him passionately.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

His imagination conjured up scenes — mental pictures.

"The handsomest man in London"—that was how Hamilton Clark had described "Mansergh of the Guards."

And she had loved him. She had risked everything for him.

He hated her!

Then with a desperate rush came the certain conviction that he loved her more madly than ever.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

He sat quite still.

How familiarly he had spoken — that man Clark! How openly. And with certainty.

It had not all been invention.

Half of it might have been Casino gossip. But the other half? Her own pitiful confession in the tea-room?

\* \* \* \* \* \*

A church clock struck two.

He raised his head.

He must write to her.

He must, because he had told her that he loved her.

He had told her that, and then he had gone away — without another word.

What had she thought?

What meaning had she given to his violent words?

A feeling of horrible physical nausea came over him.

She must have thought that he was just like those others.

That he, when she made her brave, pitiful little confession had seized the opportunity to insult her.

He had told her that he loved her — that was all.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

He took up a pen and began to write.

His hands were clammy, but his brain was on fire.

He wrote some words rapidly — read them — tore up the paper and began again.

What could he say to her?

Apologize?

He flung down the pen and covered his face with his hands.

For many minutes he sat quite still. From between his strained fingers there came tears. They dripped on the table. It was horrible.

Just to think of it. It was necessary for him to apologize to her because he had said he loved her without at once adding that he wanted to marry her.

It was horrible.

He had built up such lovely plans for their future — his — hers. He had gloried in the knowledge that he had at last met his ideal — the woman of his dreams. He had thought of her — dreamed of her — idealized her — worshiped her.

He pushed the paper aside. It was impossible. He could not write.

The night was very still. Out of the silence there came, gradually, a little insistent sound. Some one was whispering in his ear. Some one was recalling certain happenings in his own life. The gay student days in Paris — in London.

Sullen red blood mounted to his face. He clenched his hands violently.

That was different!

But the whispers continued. Then they softly died away and a familiar voice took their place. Senator Willard was speaking. "It might be bet-

ter to realize that Nature is very much the same in both sexes, and to give women full credit for temptations resisted rather than to insist on placing them in a separate, glorified arena."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Jack stared out at the dark waters.

He did not know what he believed. What he thought. Even what he felt.

But he knew he must write to her.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

It was a strange love-letter, but it "must do."

"Dear —, will you marry me? I love you. You know that — don't you? I love you, and I want you to try and learn to love me well enough to marry me. Will you? This afternoon I couldn't say what I'm saying now because my mind was full of other things — of what you had said to me. But you were not offended — were you? Please meet me on the Terrace, our corner, at three o'clock. I want you to walk in the Cap Martin woods with me. I want to hear everything — to tell you everything.

" JACK."

#### CHAPTER XI

TACK was on the terrace, waiting.

In one of his novels Hichens has said: "In times of great stress people have to act in complete accord with their natural character."

Helstan's "natural character" had, indeed, forced its way to the front in those crowded, turbulent hours between midnight and dawn.

He had felt violent.

His longing for Betty increased as the minutes rushed by. And because he so longed for her he almost, at times, hated her.

Never for a single instant did he cease to think of her.

The memory of her sweet little ways was torture. Her delicious trick of looking up suddenly — her eyes wide open as the eyes of an inquiring child. Her soft red lips slightly parted. Her white throat crying out to be kissed. He thought of her as he had seen her on the Casino Terrace that night — as he had seen her in the empty tea-room at Nice — before he knew. It was torture.

In those hours he had come to see the gulf which lay between him and his friend Bernard Westland. He, Jack Helstan, was a sort of half-breed. Irish — English — Spanish. A dangerous mix. He had always imagined that the Anglo-Saxon blood predominated, but — did it?

Just then he felt very un-English.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

He had been standing by the stone balustrade for more than three-quarters of an hour when Betty appeared.

As soon as she saw the tall figure in gray tweed she stood still for a second. She glanced at the jeweled watch on her bracelet. She had wished to be the first to arrive. Jack came towards her.

Even at that nervous moment she found herself admiring, passionately, the way his head was posed on his shoulders. He was a king amongst men.

They met. They shook hands, quite naturally. Then they fell into step and walked through the tunnel which runs under the Casino.

On the other side an open carriage was waiting. The coachman touched his hat and smiled. Mrs. Bellew was *the* celebrity of the season.

They had left Monte Carlo far behind before either of them spoke. Then it was Betty who broke the silence.

"Thanks very much for your letter. We'll talk about it — later on."

Jack looked at her. She shook her head.

"Not now — please."

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

The carriage pulled up on the brow of the hill which leads down to Mentone. They got out. Jack said something to the driver, who nodded and smiled contentedly. Then they slowly walked towards the pine wood.

Even though the year was still young the air was delicious. Warm and extraordinarily still.

In the shadows of perfumed branches one seemed very far away from the laugh and jibe and scoff of everyday life at Monte Carlo. The monotonous click of the fatal ivory ball was forgotten. So was the sullen ping — ping — from the Tir aux Pigeons.

Even in the depth of the little wood one could hear the murmur of a hidden sea. Tiny spring flowers were carefully unfolding their petals. Here and there a bird, high up in a tree, piped out a soft note of triumph.

They came to a rustic seat and sat down. Jack threw off his soft felt hat. It was a horrible moment.

He felt a fool. A coward. But what could he say? How could he speak naturally?

Betty leaned back. She was wearing the pretty

blue suit she had chosen for the visit to Nice the day before. She looked exquisite, but very tired.

The silence became painful. Jack forced himself to look at her. At the same moment she turned her head. Their eyes met. In hers there was misery. In his violence; and passionate admiration. Betty spoke.

"It was awfully sweet and dear of you to write that letter. I'm glad you wrote it. It did me good — thanks."

"You will consent? You will try and learn to — care for me?"

The bald words infuriated him, but he could not find any others. Betty flushed painfully.

"I like you very much — you know that. But you don't really need an answer to the question — in your letter. You know that is impossible."

" Why?"

"Because you are you - and I am I."

"That's no answer."

"It's the true answer. If I were a better woman or if you were quite another sort of man——"

"How do you know what sort of man I am? Is it because my father is a clergyman that you pretend to believe I'm not human?"

He spoke roughly. She looked at him, wonderingly.

"I know you're human enough, only — not that sort of human."

"You mean ---?"

"Of course you don't want to marry me—the idea is impossible. And I couldn't bear to think that you—thought of anything—else——"

" Why?"

Her eyes filled. She looked down. Her hands were tightly clasped on her lap. Jack looked at her. Then he fixed his eyes on the trees straight before him. There was quite a long silence.

Betty touched his arm.

"Jack!" She spoke very softly. "Please let us talk it out. We've both made a horrible mistake, but let us be good friends — just for to-day. There are things I want to tell you only — it's hard."

"I don't suppose there's much you need tell me. I fancy I know everything — enough at any rate. There was a man dining at the Bristol last night who seemed to know you rather well. A garrulous brute who prided himself on knowing 'dear old Monty' inside out. He talked about you — and I listened."

"What was his name?" Betty spoke excitedly. Crimson spots flamed in her cheeks.

"Hamilton Clark — of New York." There was an ugly sneer on his face. Betty winced as from the cut of a whip.

"Mr. Hamilton Clark? Yes — I've met him — at the Sporting Club. He was a friend of a man I used to know."

"Lord Acland - or ---"

"Don't!"

Her voice broke. Suddenly he felt ashamed of himself. She spoke breathlessly.

"I suppose you've a right to say hard things to me, but I don't feel as if I could bear them to-day. I just want to try and make you understand how things happened - even things that you think dreadful. You see we were brought up in different surroundings. You've always lived amongst people who take life seriously - like your father - your Woman of To-morrow. You've lived with people who are religious — at least, I suppose so - but the people I've known had only one commandment, the women I mean: 'Thou shalt not get found out.' They did pretty well everything that men do - they were free as men are free, really, only - they were clever. They had husbands who knew when to shut their eyes or friends who had plenty of money, and so - they just went ahead gaily and no one seemed to think any the worse of them. Well — I suppose I wasn't clever. At any rate I got found out and that was the end of it. It was stupid of me to get caught out, but people had always been so sweet and nice to me that I thought I could do what I liked."

"You thought you had the right to deceive your husband — who loved you?"

"He didn't love me at all—at least, not then. I wasn't a bit his type, but he didn't want any one else to have the bone which legally belonged to him. There're lots of human dogs-in-the-manger, I can tell you."

She spoke defiantly. Jack turned and looked straight into her eyes.

"You can't make me believe that your husband neglected you while you cared for him—even a little."

"I didn't really care for him, though just at first I thought I was desperately in love. You see, I was young and I had never been anywhere and I wanted to have things. And then Lance was very nice at that time—he seemed most awfully fond of me, but in reality it was just that he found me absurdly ignorant about life and—rather pretty." She looked at Jack furtively. A faint smile crept across his lips. His face was very stern. The smile faded. "The mischief of it all was that I liked to be liked—I loved it. All my life, since I was a small girl, I have wanted to be liked and admired and made much of. I wanted it so much that I had to have it."

"Yes!" His face was very stern. "I don't suppose you ever found it difficult to be 'liked.' If that was your ambition it must have been gratified to the full, but what I cannot understand is your husband. He *must* have loved you very much. A man doesn't shoot another man unless the woman means everything to him?"

Betty shook her head.

"You could never understand because you aren't a bit like him — not a bit like any of the people I have known. Lance wasn't himself when he shot Gerald Mansergh, but even if he had been all right I think he'd have done it just the same. It's quite true that there are lots of human dogs-in-the-manger."

"I think a man is justified, more than justified, in defending his honor."

"Yes? So much depends on what one means by 'honor.' Lance never bothered to defend mine until—that evening."

"He trusted you."

She smiled curiously.

"Perhaps so. Who can say — now?"

"A man ought to feel that he can trust his wife."

"'Ought'?" She shook her head. "I don't believe it's a good thing to put much faith in that old saying: 'Men are men and women are women.' Men and women are very much alike — au fond."

"No!" Jack spoke vehemently. Betty looked at him.

"I know how you feel about it — I know from your books, but even very wise people sometimes make mistakes. I don't know your world, but I do know that the people I've been mixed up with have been pretty much the same — men and women. It doesn't matter whether men are found out or not, and it matters most awfully when it's a woman — that's about all."

"You mustn't say that - it's horrible."

Their eyes met. Betty looked down hurriedly.

"Oh, well," she said, "it doesn't matter. The only thing of importance now is that I should make you see, just a little, why things have happened as they have happened. I came here to-day to try to explain — if you care to hear."

"I do care to hear."

"Yes? Well — you see that the queer old world I used to know is built up on very shaky foundations — at least the people, the women, I knew intimately didn't seem to have any foundation at all. They just drifted about on the social sea — cleverly. There was Alice Granville, for example. That's an open secret — I mean her friendship with Colonel Manners. Every one knows about it — Eddy Granville knows quite well and has always known, but just because he has chosen to run in

blinkers she goes everywhere. Don't you see what I mean about foundations? If my husband had been like Eddy Granville I might still have been going to Court."

"I think he was right."

"To shoot Gerald Mansergh?" She flushed. For a moment she sat quite still. "You don't understand," she went on at last. "You are judging Lance from your own standard. He was not a bit like you." Again she paused. Helstan said nothing. "Well—it doesn't matter. I made a mess of things and got divorced. They all turned against me and I just drifted out—towards the half-world."

"You shall not say that!"

"You're thinking that your Woman of To-morrow would have pulled boldly to shore — some shore? Probably. But I'm not like her. I haven't the courage to fight against impossible odds. Of course I might have taken in plain sewing, if any one could have been found who would trust me not to flirt with their butler as I came in and out with the work. I might have swept a crossing, though even there my unfortunate face would have declared my want of character. I might have done several things of that sort, but the idea didn't occur to me. I fought as long as I could for my boy, and then — I went to Cairo — with Hugo Acland."

In her misery she spoke flippantly. Jack looked at her steadily.

- "You loved him?"
- "Hugo Acland?"
- "Lord Acland?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

- "I suppose so more or less."
- "'More or less'? And yet you allowed him to ruin your life?"
- "Oh, dear no—it was completely done for before I ran away with him. As a matter of fact it was I who made things most frightfully difficult for him. His wife divorced him, and shortly afterwards she died."
  - "And he didn't marry you?"
- "Acland? I wouldn't marry him for anything in the world."
  - "You wouldn't marry him, and yet ---?"
- "I ran away with him that's what you mean? I suppose it sounds dreadful, but it's true. Of course, I didn't really know him at first."

There was a moment of silence. Then a horrible thing happened. Jack Helstan laughed.

At the sound of that laughter Betty's face crimsoned. She shrank back into a corner of the wooden seat. Helstan was leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, his face resting on his hands.

He sat like that for several minutes. Then the strange laugh ceased. He turned and looked at the frightened woman.

"I must apologize, but I couldn't help it. The idea seemed so strange — almost funny. You didn't 'really know him,' but you went away with him, alone, to Cairo! I suppose you didn't really know him much better than you know me?" His mouth twisted. Betty thought he was going to laugh again. She looked at him piteously. He smiled. "Don't be afraid — I'm quite harmless — I was only thinking." He stopped. Then he deliberately came closer to her. "Tell me — isn't it true that if I had chanced to have plenty of money — if I had chanced to belong to your 'queer old world which has no foundations' you might, perhaps, have visited Cairo — or some other place — with me?"

He meant to hurt her. He wanted to hurt her. A look of shamed surprise came into her face. She made no answer. He caught her hand.

"Isn't it so?" He stared right into the depths of her eyes. "Tell me," he said, "which of these men did you really love — if you have ever really loved any one?"

"I cared very much for Gerald Mansergh."

"'Cared'! I'm not talking about 'cared,' I'm talking about love."

"I thought I loved him."

"'Thought.'" He pushed her hand aside roughly. "Have you never really felt anything? Has your whole life been spent in thinking and pretending and experimenting? Have you ever really loved any one—anything?"

"Yes."

He had pushed her too far. She spoke defiantly.

"Mansergh?"

She shook her head.

"Not — Ourmansky?"

"You have no right to insult me."

"Insult? My God — where is the insult? You are always with him. You use his cars and his box at the theater, you gamble with his money when your own runs out, I've seen you do it — often. Why — you are both staying at the same hotel."

His face was quivering. He had completely lost control of his temper. He was blinded by furious jealousy. At that moment he felt he could have killed her.

Betty looked at him.

Quite suddenly something within her revolted.

"That's true. We are both staying at the same hotel — why not? Should I have the right to accuse you of being the lover of any woman who happened to be staying at your hotel — and who

happened to be an acquaintance of yours? And what right have you to make such suggestions about me? Shall I tell you why you do it, why you think you have the right to insult me? It's because circumstances have pushed me into the life that almost every man leads quite naturally complacently. The sort of life that you yourself have probably led. You despise me because I've not been faithful to any one man. What do you know of such faithfulness - what does any man know? The man I married when I was seventeen took delight in telling me about his adventures 'in gay Paree'-he didn't spare the details, I assure you. Before I was eighteen I was as familiar with 'the sights' of Paris as he was pretty nearly - for he took me everywhere. He used to say he had 'finished my education.' He used to boast of having had the good luck to marry a little idiot 'right out of the nursery.' And that man was my husband, remember. And afterwards, when he got tired of the eye-opening process — when he went back to his beloved chorus girls, he thought he had the right to be wildly indignant because I had found some one who really cared for me - some one who thought I was too good and sweet to have anything to do with 'the smart set.' I just lived as other women in my set lived, but I wasn't clever - I got caught out and then lies were of no use; there was nothing for me to do but to skip right over the border and to have a good time while I could."

"'A good time'?"

Her eyes, now quite dry, blazed.

"Yes. A good time! You men think you're having a 'good time' when you play about with women to whom you aren't married. Where's the difference? What makes it reasonable for you to insult me just because I've been forced, in a way, to live something of a man's life? Is that fair?"

He stared at her. To save his life he could not have spoken at that moment. Betty caught her breath.

"You believe you've the right to say I'm not capable of 'real love' because I've not been faithful to one man. I know you feel like that because I've studied your books, but did it ever occur to you that if such a theory held water no man—not one single man, most likely, could dare to say that he was capable of 'real love'? I'm not thinking of social laws—I'm thinking of what really happens inside one's heart and soul, and I tell you that one's real self is not altered by social laws. If a man who has lived what is called an immoral life is capable of real love, so is a woman. The differences between the sexes have been made by men and women, for their own convenience.

But convenience has nothing to do with the heart or the soul. You're a famous writer, but I think you've still a great deal to learn about life. A great deal to learn about women. We aren't all made like your Woman of To-morrow. We don't all take such a serious view of life. Most of us are neither very good nor very bad — we're just women — and women have a weakness for drifting. Ever since I've read your books — especially the last one — I've wanted to tell you one thing. It's not sin that degrades — it's the consequence of that sin."

She spoke quickly — breathlessly. There was no fear in her face now. She was defending herself. She was, unconsciously, defending her sex. She was a very intelligent woman, though her beauty had always pushed that intelligence into the background. For months past, ever since a certain terrible night at Seville, she had been thinking seriously about life — her own life. Now, face to face with Jack Helstan, she was giving voice to some of the convictions which had taken form within her.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Helstan's eyes were fixed on her face, but he did not seem to see her. He was searching in the confusion of his brain for the key to the mystery. Was this really the soft frail creature who had fasci-

nated him, who had roused within him a passion of desire? Was this the beautiful sinner for whom he had felt something like contempt, even though he knew that he still worshiped the white, soft body?

He had felt superior. It was a disgusting thought, but it was true.

He had felt that he had a right to condemn her - even if he refrained from doing so - and he had not refrained. His thoughts stumbled back to his student days in Paris. He also had, in a way, finished his education there. He had always been fastidious - as a youth - as a man. But he had led "a man's life." She was right there. He had led a man's life and he was absolutely convinced that he was capable of "real love." He knew that he was capable.

Was there anything in her idea, which seemed to him so outrageous - almost disgusting - that there was no real difference between the sexes? That the accepted idea of necessary degradation to women was a convention instituted for the convenience of Society?

He tried to think it out, rapidly. It seemed to him that he *must* think it out.

It was to a large extent "the correct thing" for a man to sow wild oats.

It was not "the correct thing" for a woman.

But what had "the correct thing" to do with real life? What had it to do with character — with "growth of soul"?

He leaned forward and stared into the heart of the wood. For a long time there was silence. Then Betty touched his arm.

"We won't talk any more about it to-day. I'm rather tired. I just wanted to explain, but I don't suppose I've succeeded — I'm not at all clever, only - I've thought about things a good deal lately. I don't want to justify myself — I know it was all wrong from beginning to end - but I do think it's a pity we aren't forced to look for solid foundations when we set about building up our life. You can't expect much from a woman, even if she's pretty, who has built up on 'Do what you like, but don't get found out '! That's a convenient idea, but it can't be solid." He was looking at her and she smiled faintly. "Do you know, I've an idea that your father knows more about real life than you do? Do you mind my saying so - are you offended? Of course, he's very, very, much older, but I don't think that's the reason - not all of it. I've an idea that he must have always built himself up on solid foundations. Always — even when he was as young as you are. I told you that I liked his Why Not?

very much, and in the same little book there's a lovely essay called "My Brother." Do you remember it? Do you remember how it insists that we can't live alone - however much we may want to. That we are all brothers and sisters, and that if I go wrong, or you, an injury is done to the whole family. It's a dreadful idea in some ways, but I can't get away from the feeling that it's true."

"Betty!" Jack spoke at last. "Betty — just now you said something - I want to understand what you meant. I asked you if you had ever 'really loved' any one and you answered -'yes.'" There was a hungry look in his eyes. He caught her hands and held them closely. She flushed. For a moment she was silent. Then she said -

"I know what you think - you think I meant you?" He leaned towards her. The hungry eyes devoured her face. She shook her head. "No! I wasn't thinking of you. I was thinking of my boy - of little Jim."

His grasp on her hands loosened — he drew back. Betty stood up.

"Shall we go home?" she said. "At least shall we go back to Monte Carlo?"

He was standing close to her. She looked up. In her eyes there were tears.

Jack bent his head and she offered him her lips
— simply — as a child might offer a kiss to some
one it loved.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

The afternoon had been warm and lovely.

Senator Willard had induced his old friend to take a drive. They had enjoyed a cup of tea on the broad terrace of the Cap Martin Hotel. Then Dr. Helstan had suggested that they should return to the carriage through the wood.

The two men mounted the incline slowly. They were surrounded by thickly planted trees. On the soft green carpet their footsteps were noiseless.

Suddenly Dr. Helstan leaned heavily on his friend's arm. He stood still.

Senator Willard looked at him. Then he, too, caught sight of two figures — standing close together — near the rustic seat.

He said something. The old man pressed his arm.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Very softly, with infinite caution, they retraced their steps and returned to the hotel.

When they were back on the terrace which overlooks the sea Dr. Helstan spoke for the first time.

"You will oblige me if you do not say anything to him — or any one — about this."

#### CHAPTER XII

THAT evening Mrs. Wainright dined at the Hôtel Bristol. Dr. Helstan and his son had been invited to make up the little party of four, but at the last moment, just after Mrs. Wainright's arrival, a telegram was handed to the Senator. It had been sent off from San Remo, and contained the words: "Many regrets, impossible get back in time for dinner. John Helstan."

Dr. Helstan was talking to the guest of honor when the telegram arrived. He was looking spruce and debonair in an immaculate suit of fine black broadcloth, but his face was stern, his manner unusually quiet.

Senator Willard read the telegram, paused, then handed it to the old man, with a few words of apology to Mrs. Wainright. Dr. Helstan held the paper in his hand. The stern look on his face became more marked. For a moment he stood motionless.

Mr. Willard and Mrs. Wainright were talking about some event of the afternoon; the lady was laughing gaily. Dr. Helstan read his son's words

again. Then — the gesture was certainly unconscious — he crushed the paper in his hand and threw it into a wicker basket.

Senator Willard turned to him.

"I have just explained to Mrs. Wainright that we shall only be a party of three—unhappily. Shall we go in?"

The old man looked startled. Then he collected his thoughts. He smiled.

"I beg your pardon — of course."

Mrs. Wainright glanced from one to the other. She was looking very handsome and distinguished in a simple dinner dress made of black satin. Her beautiful white hair was dressed high, and at one side there was a diamond comb; it was her only ornament, except the famous pearl necklace which she wore night and day.

Dr. Helstan looked at her admiringly. He turned to his host.

"Old age has its privileges — may I take your place — just for a moment?"

He bowed and offered his arm. Mrs. Wainright took it with evident delight. As they passed through the crowded hall every one looked at them.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

All through dinner the old man was curiously silent. There was a wistful look in his eyes. Once

or twice Senator Willard fancied he saw the fine, capable hands tremble. The American was himself feeling uneasy.

The discovery of the afternoon in the wood at Cap Martin had made a profound impression on him. And now—this strange telegram. What did it all mean?

He doubled his efforts to seem cheerful and to amuse his handsome guest. It was quite evident that Mrs. Wainright was enjoying herself thoroughly.

To Dr. Helstan her manner was deferential and yet gay. Every moment she turned to him and asked his opinion on one subject or another. She was absolutely charming. Before the fruit came on the table the old man's heart was won. He still looked uneasy, very thoughtful, but little by little he allowed himself to take part in the animated discussions which were cunningly started by the Senator in the hope that he might be "drawn."

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Before they took possession of a cozy corner in the little salon where the Senator had ordered coffee to be served, Mrs. Wainright had plunged into the depths of social conditions in her own country. She had shown herself so genuinely interested that Dr. Helstan expanded. The stern

lines had relaxed. The beautiful old face was beaming.

"My dear madam, it's all so outrageously simple! Are we mad, that we find it hard to realize that every man and woman and child has a right to a share in the Father's Kingdom? That every man and woman and child born into this world has the right to fresh air and sunshine and wholesome food and decent clothes? Are we mad, that we find it hard to realize that every one has the right to a fair chance to work and to sleep and to play and to eat? We may not all have the right to such pearls as you're wearing, because very few of us have enough money to pay for them; but fresh air and sunshine, the sea and the fields, the little violets in the woods --- " Suddenly he stopped and looked down. Then, more slowly, he added, "One can't lay down a fixed law for social conditions, but it seems to me that the eight-hour theory is workable. Eight hours for good honest work, eight hours for sleep, eight hours for food and recreation."

"Many of our men — most of them, I fancy" — Mrs. Wainright glanced at Senator Willard — "work twelve hours a day — even more."

"So I've been told. But the system's wrong, in my opinion. If you borrow hours from lawful rest you've to pay a heavy penalty. And how can

a man make himself acquainted with his family or with his friends if he has less than eight hours for food and recreation?"

"'Acquainted'?" Mrs. Wainright laughed. Then she nodded her head vigorously. "I believe you're right! Many of our men—and I suppose it's the same in other countries—don't really know their own home people at all—really know them, I mean."

"That's just it. And if you haven't time to get thoroughly acquainted with people you aren't in a position to lend a helping hand when it's needed. And if you can't lend a helping hand — why, what's the good of it all?"

Senator Willard leaned back in his chair, well satisfied. He wished very much to please Mrs. Wainright, who was an old and valued friend. He knew that she would enjoy hearing Dr. Helstan talk if the old man could be induced to let himself go, and he had been nervous about the success of his little party since the arrival of that strange telegram.

Dr. Helstan was wrapped up in his son. He was an exceedingly reserved man. So reserved that Mr. Willard knew that he would not in any circumstances discuss that son's actions. But the discovery at Cap Martin had disturbed him seriously. And then the telegram?

Mr. Willard found Jack Helstan a congenial and amusing companion, but it was the father who came first with him. He would willingly do anything in his power to save that dear old man from disappointment.

He leaned back and sipped his coffee. Mrs. Wainright was speaking eagerly.

"You would shut us out of Europe?"

Dr. Helstan smiled.

"Not quite that! But I certainly think that European manners and customs and vices aren't useful to you. When I've the chance, I mean to say, 'Come over to Europe and amuse yourselves when you want a holiday, but don't use Europe as a crutch. Strengthen your own legs and strike out on your own lines. You've got the right stuff, and plenty of it, in your own country. You've got young blood and fresh ideas and plenty of go and pluck. Push along on your own lines. Use the methods that are best suited to your own mentality. Join hands and swear to make America the finest country in the world—the finest and purest and most successful."

Mrs. Wainright raised her dark brows in a look of comical amazement.

"Even you advocate worldly success?"

"To be sure. Why not? Every man has the right to succeed in this world if he works on the

right lines — on the lines laid down by the Father. We were meant to be successful. Remember the story of the 'talents'! It's our duty to do our best with the means that come to hand, provided these means will pass muster with Him."

Mrs. Wainright looked at him. Then her brilliant eyes sought Mr. Willard's face. He smiled. The old man watched them.

"You and the Senator are thinking that I'll get put in my place — over there across the water — in your wonderful States? You think they'll pluck off my fine feathers and show me up as a stringy old rooster, because I mean to wear my best broadcloth and put up at a comfortable hotel while I'm attacking, tooth and nail, your Almighty Dollar — for it's the personality of the Dollar that's tempting me to take that journey. I'm going to have a good try at putting that enemy in its place!"

"You despise money?"

"No, ma'am — very far from it. But I'd despise myself heartily if money had the power to make me a slave. I've studied your country and your people quite a little bit, and I'm of opinion that you are being driven about by two lusty slave-drivers — Boss Dollar and Boss Hustle! Your men are in such a hurry to make money that they've no time to realize what money is

worth. They're so fond of hustling through life that they pass out, many of them, without realizing what Life really means. I'm a conceited old man! I'm persuaded that I can do great things for your compatriots, and, please God, I'm going to organize a revolution in the States! I'm of opinion that lots of your young men and women are ripe for war, and I'm going to see if I can't lead them out!"

"Against the Dollar?"

"Against the tyranny of the Dollar! Why, my dear lady, just go back even a little way - to the days when you were a girl. Not so very long ago?" He smiled and nodded his head. "Certainly not very long ago, and yet - think of the changes which have taken place since then. Changes even in the home — in home life. Twentyfive or thirty years ago it was quite an easy thing for a pretty girl with a modest dress allowance to dance about and enjoy herself with the best. People in those days used to give parties because they wanted their friends to have a good time, and all the nice goodies were made at home - by 'Mother' and the girls. People gave 'surprise parties' and 'shower parties'-I've heard all about them from one of my parishioners who has cousins in Chicago. The boys and girls had a real good time, and nobody felt out of it, because nobody thought it necessary to make a big splash. And isn't that the right way? Isn't that the true spirit of hospitality? Isn't it a mean thing to try and 'go one better' than our neighbors just because we happen to have a little more money than they have? Isn't it paltry? The Senator there gave us some fine Sauterne at dinner - and I like a glass of good Sauterne now and then! But if I was a very poor man and could only offer him lemonade when he came to dine with me — the best lemonade I could find, of course shouldn't I have the right to feel hurt if he, metaphorically, threw that fine Sauterne in my face? You see, the truth is that my best is equal to his best, for it's only the intention and good feeling that counts!"

Mrs. Wainright looked dismayed.

"I really am afraid ——" she began.

Mr. Willard burst out laughing.

"So am I," he said.

Dr. Helstan beamed on them both.

"I'm not a bit afraid. Your people are a lot more sensible than you seem to think. They've had an over-dose of Boss Dollar—they're rapidly getting into the right frame for a revolt. And this is true of men in the highest positions as well as of the modest little house-wives in your country towns. You're tremendous—you Americans.

You're bound to rule the world — sooner or later — bound. Just at present, in my opinion, your sense of proportion is defective. You write Money and Europe in capital letters, and you're still young enough to grimace when some one suggests that the family standard must be the public standard — that there's only one code — that a man deserves to be kicked who thinks that he can do in public life what he'd be ashamed to do in private, even though that man might chance to be a multi-millionaire."

Mrs. Wainright was excited. There was a tinge of color in her pale cheeks. She looked regally handsome.

Senator Willard watched her and felt satisfied. His little party was a success — after all.

For a moment or two no one spoke. Then Mrs. Wainright leaned across the table and looked at the old man; she was smiling.

"I shall love your lectures! I shall certainly follow you — wherever you may go! Cannot you give me some official position? Are there to be programs — or explanatory booklets — or anything of that sort to be handed round? I think I should be successful in getting through the crowds, for certainly there will be crowds, fairly quickly."

"I've no doubt." The old man's eyes twinkled.

"Don't be afraid — I'll find something for you to do. The Senator is already booked. He's going to kick off my revolutionary ball."

"What are you going to do?" Mrs. Wainright looked at her host. He laughed rather nervously.

"Dr. Helstan has formed far too high an opinion of my character—and of my influence. He imagines that I could do a great deal by making a firm stand—a sort of political stand—and of trying to get a few others to back me up."

"My dear sir, imagination has nothing to do with it—I know what you could do. What you are going to do. As for this dear lady—how about a nice little watering-pot—and a nice little spade? I shouldn't like to injure your gorgeous feathers, but I do want some watering done. I do want some, the more the better—lovely women with kind hearts, to soften the soil, here, there and everywhere, and then to water the poor dry earth. It would be the nicest possible work, I assure you. You'd enjoy it immensely."

Mrs. Wainright stared at him. Then she turned to her old friend.

"Do you understand?"

Dr. Helstan laughed delightedly.

"Oh, dear, yes—he understands perfectly. I've had him boxed up in a corner, down there in

the hall, for hours at a stretch. I've tried several of my 'chats' on him! Come now, Senator, answer up. Show that you've profited by my gabble-gabble. Tell this new helper of mine all about the watering-pot and spade."

Mr. Willard hesitated. He glanced at Mrs. Wainright, who was eager and smiling. At last he said slowly—

"Dr. Helstan has an idea that there is good in every one—much good. And he thinks that this quality may be encouraged to come to the surface by the spade of human sympathy and the watering-pot of—"

He stopped short. The old man reached over and patted his shoulder.

"Don't be nervous, my good little boy; say the word right out — Love! Funny, isn't it, that some of us are shy of that beautiful little word? Even grown-up young men who could sport mustaches if they weren't so fond of razors?" He looked from one to the other, smiling. Mrs. Wainright grew suddenly serious.

"You really think that, Dr. Helstan? You really believe that there are hidden possibilities in every one? Possibilities for good, I mean?"

"I don't think it. I know it! The certain existence of good, predominating good, is the Great Reality of life. The man or woman who handles

the spade of sympathy or the watering-pot of love hasn't a hard task to fulfil. Half-an-hour would probably do the business - five minutes' careful gardening has often brought to the surface the loveliest little crop."

"What a beautiful thought! Beautiful! I do wish I could do something to help. You make things seem possible — almost simple, and yet ——"

"You doubt the existence of those precious germs? Or do you doubt the power of sympathy - and love?"

She shook her head.

"I don't think I doubt, but it would be difficult, I think — sometimes very difficult."

The old man looked at her.

"I fancy you're thinking of some individual case? You have some one in your mind - some special person who seems to need watering?"

She was silent. At last she said —

"I should dislike to betray a confidence, but the person I have in my mind is a sort of public character - here. It is a woman, young and very lovely, who is staying at my hotel and in whom I have been very much interested. I have more than once thought of trying to speak to her - she really looks very nice — but, of course, it is not my affair; still ---"

Senator Willard bent his eyes on the table. He

was disturbed. Dr. Helstan was looking earnestly at the handsome American woman.

"She is a woman — in trouble, I take it, and yet you say it is not your affair?"

Mrs. Wainright drew herself up.

"As to 'trouble,' I don't know. She has certainly had a sad history — I heard it from a friend of mine the other day. She is gay and immensely admired, but I have often thought that she does not seem happy. Once or twice she has looked at me as though she wanted to speak. To-night we came down in the lift together — when I was ready to come here — and she looked so sad ——"

"May I ask if you are speaking of a lovely young woman who gambles every day at the Casino — a young woman named Mrs. Bellew?"

Dr. Helstan asked the question breathlessly. His wrinkled hands were clutching a magazine which lay on the table. In his eyes there was a strangely eager look. Mrs. Wainright felt and looked surprised.

"Why, yes," she said, "that's the woman. Do you know her?"

"I have seen her very often." The old man's voice was trembling. "Are you quite sure that she was at your hotel when you left it to come here?"

"Absolutely sure. We came down in the lift

together and I saw her going into the dining-room."

Dr. Helstan leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes.

Mrs. Wainright stole a glance at the Senator, but his face was well under control; it betrayed nothing.

It was the old clergyman who broke the silence.

"Thank you," he said. "What you have said has interested me so much that I want to hear more—much more."

The expression on his face was beautiful. A holy calm seemed suddenly to have descended on him. He looked happy.

Mrs. Wainright hesitated. Then she said —

"I don't see that I can do any harm. The story is an open secret — Mrs. Bellew's story, I mean. I heard all the particulars the other day from a charming Englishwoman who used to know her quite intimately — when she was in society."

"I'm quite sure that you will not do any harm.
On the contrary, you may do much good."

Mrs. Wainright settled back in her chair and began to speak. Just at first she tried to choose the most effective words. Then, carried away by the subject, she told the story almost as breathlessly as Mrs. Childers had told it.

Senator Willard remained resolutely silent. Now and again the old man asked a question.

It did not take long—that pitiful recital of a woman's life.

Eight or ten minutes.

At the end of that time Dr. Helstan knew pretty well all there was to be known about the woman he had seen in the Cap Martin wood that afternoon.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

"You would feel afraid to use your spade and watering-pot on that poor parched ground?" The old man spoke softly. His eyes were shining. Mrs. Wainright shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"How could one set about it? And then, how could one feel at all sure that — anything of that sort would be welcome? She certainly seems very well content with the present state of affairs, and, of course, she's enormously admired."

"You have never spoken to her?"

"No." She hesitated. "Mrs. Bellew doesn't seem to know any women here, and that makes it difficult."

"All her old friends walk on the other side of the road?"

"Well, yes — of course. It does in a way seem rather a shame, but — it would be impossible to accept women of that type in society."

"Society must be guarded — of course." Dr.

Helstan was smiling. "And men 'of that type'—what about them?"

"Oh, Dr. Helstan! You are full of charity, I know, but even you cannot pretend to think that men and women can be judged alike."

"My dear madam, I don't pretend to think anything of the sort. I know that they are not 'judged alike' by the Judge who rules over us."

"You mean ---?"

Mrs. Wainright looked uncertain. The old man's smile broadened.

"I think you know very well what I mean. I'm a staunch believer in the literal acceptation of the Bible, but I've never been able to think of Adam without making a wry face. 'The woman tempted me' is such a poor sort of excuse."

"But there are women who make it their business to tempt men?"

"Probably. Just as there are men who make it their business to tempt women. But then we brag a lot about being the stronger sex."

She was silent. A moment later Dr. Helstan spoke again.

"I've been interested in that poor pretty creature. It has hurt me to see her trying to win money at the Casino. She doesn't look like a professional temptress. Her eyes are very beautiful — they're pathetic. Once before in my

life I saw eyes which had very much the same expression——"

He stopped suddenly. Senator Willard and Mrs. Wainright looked at him questioningly. He paused.

"They were my wife's eyes," he added quietly.

#### CHAPTER XIII

"HÔTEL CÔTE D'AZUR, San Remo.
Midnight."

Jack Helstan was again trying to write a letter to the woman he loved.

It was a difficult letter to write.

There was so much that must be said. So very much that must not be said. Many subjects to be avoided. Few that were quite safe.

He sat back in his chair and leaned his hands on the writing-table. He felt very tired.

Immediately after having seen Betty enter her hotel he had taken train for San Remo. It had been impossible for him to face his father or Senator Willard. He had to be alone. When, after a time, he remembered that this was the night of the American's little dinner-party he hurried to the post office and sent a telegram. His conscience accused him when he realized that but for this engagement he would probably have neglected to explain his absence.

At that moment his father's certain anxiety lacked importance.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

How could she do it?

How had it all been possible?

So sweet — so exquisite — so, in a way, unsophisticated. Such a girl.

And yet, there was no getting away from it, so experienced.

It was extraordinary. It seemed to him abnormal — quite horrible.

A mistake? A folly? A sin? Yes! All that he could understand, easily. A sin regretted, repented — finally wiped out. All that was so understandable. So human.

But this?

It was frightful — what she had done! Gone off to Cairo with a man she had loved "more or less" because, apparently, there was nothing else to do.

It was unthinkable.

Could he ever understand it - ever?

Then he questioned himself sternly.

Why should he try to understand. Was it necessary? Was it even advisable?

Silently he asked the questions. The answer came without a second's delay —"Yes!"

How could they live together, husband and wife, if there was an iron door of misunderstanding between them? What chance of happiness would there be for them in such circumstances?

He rested his head on his hands and stared down at the blank paper.

Was she quite sane? Had her trouble made discord in her brain? Was it really possible that she, in a sane moment, meant what she had said about men and women being "pretty much the same"?

It was a horrible thought. And yet she had expressed it quite naturally.

A sound that was like a groan broke from him.

Possibilities — certainties — crowded into his brain. He seized the pen.

"Dear — it's useless to hesitate. The one thing certain in this world is that we two must be together. Everything else may go by — that must be a reality, and at once. Trust me, darling. Believe me when I say that I shall never speak of the past — never in any circumstances reproach you. We must begin life afresh — somewhere far away from those beasts who know. No one shall dare to annoy or insult my wife! Betty — leave everything to me. There will be difficulties, but I can find a way to overcome them. My father has terribly strong narrow views — he would surely say things that would wound you — I shall not tell him anything until it is too late for interference — until we are safely married. Trust me, darling — believe me,

when I say that I shall know how to protect you. In a very few days — just as soon as I can arrange it — you will belong to me — to me only.

"Darling — there is one thing of vital importance. You must at once give that beast Ourmansky the cut direct. At once, without a moment's delay. Make no apology — give no explanation — just pass him by as if you had never seen him before. Betty — this is a command, and you must obey it. I will not allow you to speak to Ourmansky — I cannot allow it, for the brute has laid his devilish plans — he means to compromise you one way or another."

The pen fell from between his fingers. He sat quite still.

Ourmansky?

She had denied it, but ----?

The fervor of passion and excitement which had driven his pen a moment before suddenly died. He felt like a man who had overtaxed his strength in a long race. He was done.

The moments crept by.

Still he sat motionless in his chair.

There was a ceaseless knocking in his brain. A little insistent tap — tap — like the click of a telegraphic message. The same words were repeated again and again.

"She denied it - denied it - but?"

The shadow of a tragedy familiar to many fell on him.

Intimate, married, life with some one passionately loved but not trusted.

Could he really trust her — ever?
Could she ever really trust herself?

The hand that lay on the table was trembling. He felt he had come to an end of everything except his dogged determination to possess her — to snatch her away from "that Russian brute." That had to happen! After that — who could tell?

\* \* \* \* \* \*

How long he sat there by the table he never knew. The little room, with its sea-green walls and white woodwork, grew lighter and lighter as a pale gold sun crept up from the shadows. A lamp standing on the chest of drawers burnt low. There was a sickly smell of oil. Jack got up slowly and crossed the room. He turned out the lamp and went to the window.

The air was chilly, the stillness oppressive. It seemed to him that he was alone in a newly made world. No sign of anything human. No sound — not even the chirp of a bird.

He was tired. It was impossible to think things out. Only one thing was certain—quite certain. She must belong to him!

Of what use all those beautiful romantic dreams of the ideal woman?

She was ideal — in many ways. Ideally lovely and sweet and desirable. She obsessed him — that was enough. They could be deliriously happy if only he could blot out those hateful thoughts — suspicions — imaginings.

He must blot them out. He must! In that and that alone lay happiness — for him and for her. He could not understand her. It seemed to him that never, to the end of their lives, would it be possible for him to understand. But he loved her passionately.

That was the one thing certain.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

He took up the letter and read it through. Then he sat down and added —

"Write to me the moment you get this letter and say where and when I can see you — to-day. I shall be at the Bristol between nine and ten.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

#### BETTY'S ANSWER

At noon a telegram arrived at the Bristol, addressed to Monsieur John Helstan. It contained these words—

"Our terrace at three, we might go up to Turbie."

#### CHAPTER XIV

I was a magnificent day.

Such an exceptionally beautiful day that every one seemed to have been dominated by the

same idea. La Turbie — the mirage!

Quite early in the afternoon crowds of people had arrived at the highly ornate hotel which crowns the heights of La Turbie. They had come en auto, on horseback, in carriages and by the little train which creeps up and up the mountain-side many times each day, from Monte Carlo. The wonderful mirage, so much discussed and so rarely visible, reflects the island of Corsica and — when visible — it is seen to perfection from the terrace which lies in front of the hotel at La Turbie. Hence, on a fine clear day, the upward flow of trains and carriages.

When Jack Helstan and Mrs. Bellew reached the mountain railway station the fever of excitement on the terrace was at its height. Tea-tables were huddled together on every side; and each table had its frame of eager men and women.

At the entrance Betty stood still. Her quick eyes

took in the whole scene. She recognized familiar faces.

Mr. Hamilton Clark was there with a party of men friends. Sir Henry Chaplin and — yes, there could be no mistake — Mrs. Ellerby and her daughter.

Betty's color rose. She turned to the tall man at her side.

"What a frightful crowd! Don't let us attempt the impossible—let us stroll along the Corniche Road—I know the mirage by heart."

Jack looked down at her. His face was set and rather white. He also had seen Mr. Hamilton Clark and the Ellerbys.

He shook his head and advanced a step or two. Betty, perforce, walked by his side.

She was dressed in white from head to foot. A simple white linen dress, but every woman on the terrace recognized the costliness of that simplicity. At her waist-belt she wore a big bunch of Malmaison carnations, the only touch of color in that virginal "creation." Every one stared and whispered. Mr. Hamilton Clark screwed a monocle into his eye, a foppish single glass which had often been ridiculed by his compatriots, and tilted back his chair to get a better view. He attracted Helstan's attention; he winked furtively. Every line of his laughing, rather handsome face ex-

pressed "Sly rascal—you haven't lost much time!"

Jack was filled with furious determination to secure a table in some prominent position. If a glance would have wrought murder the jovial American would have ceased to exist at the moment when he rose and addressed Mrs. Bellew.

"Chère Madame — what a piece of luck to meet you here — and my friend Helstan too. Pray do me the honor of joining our little party — there isn't a vacant table in the whole place."

The men who composed the "little party" stood up and looked actively delighted. One of them Mrs. Bellew knew slightly. The others were presented with a sort of flourish of trumpets. Jack Helstan did not dare to speak. He could not trust his temper. Just then Sir Henry Chaplin made his way to Mrs. Bellew's side.

"Very pleased to see you up here — what a glorious day — what a crowd! I'm just going to visit the Monastery with a friend from Mentone — won't you take possession of our table — it's in a comparatively quiet corner?"

Betty looked up into the kindly old face. She smiled. Sir Henry glanced at her escort and she introduced the two men. The old man scanned the bronzed face which looked so disturbed. He held out his hand.

"Glad to make your acquaintance. Heard about you, of course — read several of your books. Tremendous celebrities — you and your father."

He moved in the direction of the table he had just vacated. Betty, with a slight salutation to the group of men who were eagerly staring at her, walked with him, Jack Helstan on the other side.

When they reached the "quiet corner" Sir Henry presented his friend, a tall stern-looking Englishman. For a moment or two they all talked about the mirage which had not yet appeared. Then Sir Henry remarked that it was "time to be moving." His wrinkled face looked very kindly as he held Mrs. Bellew's hand and pressed it. He seemed about to say something to her — then, suddenly, he turned to the rigid figure in pale-gray tweed.

"Take good care of this little lady, Mr. Helstan—she's too young and foolish to be allowed to run about alone!"

He grasped Jack's hand and looked straight into the angry eyes. He seemed to ask a question. For a second there was silence. Then Jack said—

"Trust me, sir — I'll do my best."

Sir Henry nodded. He looked puzzled, but vaguely pleased. As he and his friend threaded

their way through the crowd he glanced sharply at the Hamilton Clark party. The men were all talking eagerly: the host was laughing rather loudly.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Meantime Mrs. Bellew had made a disconcerting discovery. The little table in the corner was quite close to the table at which Mrs. Ellerby and her daughter were entertaining some English friends. Betty made the discovery immediately after the departure of Sir Henry Chaplin and his friend, but Jack was insistently staring at the menu card and saw nothing. He was trying to regain control of himself.

Coming up in the crowded train he and Betty had talked of the weather — the scenery — anything and everything that was unimportant and unnatural. Just at first they had both been nervous, but Betty, womanlike, had quickly recovered self-possession. Jack, on the other hand, had grown more and more uncomfortable as the train approached La Turbie. He guessed that the splendor of the afternoon would attract a big crowd to the popular hotel, and he made up his mind to a certain course of action. He had had enough of secrecy. He was going, now and in the future, to make it evident that Mrs. Bellew had a protector who would shortly be her husband. There should

be no more "drifting." Things might be difficult — more than a little difficult, but that could not be helped. He meant to go straight ahead and to take Betty with him — with or without her consent.

He told himself that he was a coward because he had been tempted to turn aside when he saw Mrs. Ellerby on the terrace. For a single second he had hesitated, but then he had faced the position. If Mrs. Ellerby knew the truth, his father would have to know it, at once.

And why not?

He was asking himself this question as he stared down at the little card. The answer came when he lifted his eyes and found himself face to face — only the width of two tables between them — with Kate Ellerby's mother.

The old lady was looking at him. On her cheeks there were two red, angry spots. Her mouth was pressed into a thin line.

Jack raised his hat and bowed. He smiled rather unnaturally.

Mrs. Ellerby looked straight at him. Then she deliberately turned away. Her action was unmistakable.

Jack flushed. Then his face grew very white. He rose abruptly from his seat. Betty laid her hand on his arm.

"Jack!" Her voice was very low, but he caught her words. "Don't make a scene — I couldn't bear it." Then she laughed quite naturally and spoke aloud. "Yes — please order a lemon squash and some dry biscuits — nothing else — it's much too hot for tea."

A waiter took the order. Jack sank back into his seat and stared hard at the sea. He was trembling with impotent rage. With inimitable tact Betty kept up a run of careless talk about the non-arrival of the mirage — the latest Casino gossip — the coming Battle of Flowers at Nice, and so on. From time to time Jack spoke a word or two. He hardly knew what he was saying.

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Kate Ellerby was talking as quickly and excitedly as Betty herself. She was trying to seem natural and to force a change of conversation. The friends from Mentone were asking eager questions about Mrs. Bellew and Jack Helstan, whom they knew by sight. Mrs. Ellerby was answering the questions with disconcerting clearness. She was speaking rather loudly, with intention: Kate knew this. The situation was becoming unbearable.

Suddenly, inspired by love, Kate pretended that the unusual heat had made her feel very faint. She said she must go into the hotel and rest. Her mother, who was really attached to her, was terrified. A moment later the whole party rose and walked across the terrace towards the house. Betty turned and looked after them. She too had grown strangely white. For a moment or two she was silent. Then, very quietly, she said—

- "What did you mean to do that time?"
- "I meant to make that infernal old woman ---"
- "Recognize me? Did you contemplate an introduction?"

She was smiling, but her eyes were fixed and hard. Jack stared at her. He said nothing. He felt incapable of speaking coherently.

Betty sat and looked at him. Then she said—
"Suppose we leave the mirage for another day
and stroll along the Corniche Road?"

\* \* \* \* \* \*

The famous road which clings to the mountainside was almost deserted. Now and then a cart or two, filled with dull red stone, rumbled past; but that was all. Jack and Betty were practically alone on the gray-green heights where olive-trees lay against great rocks and where masses of dark green laurel filled the fertile patches in between. Far down below, the white Casino of Monte Carlo basked in the sun. Betty rested her two hands on a low wall and stared at it.

"Poor wicked old Monty!" she said. "It's a

comfy old place. I shall be glad to be down there again."

"Betty!"

Jack came to her side, very close. He caught her hand.

"Betty!"

She looked up defiantly.

"Well? Aren't you satisfied? Wasn't it pretty conclusive — all that — on the terrace? Are you still anxious to discuss the 'possibilities' of the future — our future?"

She laughed, almost rudely. Her naturally sweet temper had been pushed aside by bitter thoughts and memories. She felt so hurt and angry that she wanted to hurt some one—even the man she loved. She was sick of it all—so she told herself. These self-righteous beasts—let them say what they pleased—think what they pleased—what did she care?

Jack held her hands tightly. She struggled to free them, but his grasp was iron. She bit her lip. Her eyes were full of angry tears.

"What's the good of looking at me like that?" she said. "You know the truth as well as I do—what's to be gained by pretending? You belong to one world. I belong to another world. There you are! I can't go into your world, for the dear

delightful people who dwell therein would kick me out in double quick time. You can't come into my world because you don't belong there — because you never could belong."

"Where you belong, I belong."

" No!"

"But yes. Absolutely and most certainly, yes. You think you have made the position—our position, very clear. Shall I tell you just where we stand? 'For good or for ill I am your husband, your lover, your children, your all—to you I give my love, whether it be your heaven or your hell. It is destiny. When I first looked into your eyes I knew.' That was Parnell's creed and it is mine. You belong to me as I belong to you—body and soul."

Betty looked at him. How strong he was. How splendid. How impossible!

She sat down on the low wall. Jack came and sat beside her.

Since that vehement declaration of his creed he had changed. He looked calm, almost happy. His lips curved into a smile as he laid a brown hand on her knees, palm upwards. There was invitation in the gesture. A little white hand crept into the brown prison. His fingers closed gently.

For several minutes neither spoke. Then Betty said —

"Jack! Will you try and look at things as they really are? We care a lot for each other that, of course - but don't you see that it's all useless? Circumstances are too strong for us. The situation is too difficult. It's more than difficult - it's impossible. I cannot go back to the days when I was a foolish little kiddy-girl - innocent, eager, ambitious. A vain little fool, but innocent. God knows that I would give twenty years of my life if I could wipe it all out and start afresh, but it's impossible. Your love for me, my love for you, can do nothing to change me really. I mean change me in any worldly sense. I think it's horribly unfair, but there it is. And though it seems so unfair I suppose it's for the best. It wouldn't do for women to be free as men are free — at least, I suppose it wouldn't do. All the same it seems hideously unfair that one cannot make a fresh start - ever - if one is a woman." She stopped short and looked straight at him. Her lovely lips looked disdainful. "Society with a big S must be kept in good working order, of course. And Society says that a woman must either be very well behaved or very clever. I was neither well behaved nor clever, and so they kicked me out! And, Jack - when a woman gets kicked out she has to stay out. That's an iron rule. You couldn't pull me up-

I don't want to pull you down——" Again she stopped. Her cheeks were aflame. "I won't pull you down," she said vehemently. "Never—never."

"There is no need for a 'pull' either way. We are going to get married — at once — that's all!"

" No!"

"But yes."

She turned and faced him.

"Jack — what do you suggest that we should do after this — marriage? Wander off to a deserted island and live on nuts? Move about from place to place because here and there some one has recognized us — and talked? What about your father? And all your friends in London? And how do you suppose I should enjoy trying to hide from people — or trying to 'brazen it out'? Look at it from every side — any side, and you'll see that it's impossible — impossible." She was strongly excited. The color came and went in her cheeks. Her eyes were hard. Jack was dismayed.

"Betty! Darling — darling — don't talk in this way. Do you suppose I should allow any human being to annoy or insult you — my wife? Do you think I could not protect you and shield you from any of these fancied dangers?"

"'Fancied.' They are about the most certain

and real 'dangers' that exist in this world. They are inevitable dangers. If we both lived to be eighty years of age the 'danger' would remain. Every time I said a civil word to a man some one would sneer and say, 'Oh - at her old games - she was the famous Mrs. Bellew - don't you remember?' If we married and had children your best friends would say, 'We hope everything is right—we hope they really are Helstan's children.' You are shocked? You think I am coarse - unwomanly? I understand how you feel, but you haven't had my experiences - you don't really know what people are capable of saying and thinking. Why - that nice old man who spoke to me just now, Sir Henry Chaplin - even he once insulted me grossly - without meaning it - at least, I'm sure he didn't mean it. He came to see me in Paris after my boy's - after my boy had passed away - and he actually asked me if Jim was my husband's child? He seemed to think the question quite natural. Think of it think of it! Because of what I've done - because I have been in a way forced to live a man's life a good-hearted old man like that found it difficult to believe that I could ever have been innocent. Oh — it's disgusting — horrible — unjust. But it's inevitable. Every friend you possess would call you a fool if you married me. Not one single woman of your acquaintance would receive me in her house. And your father ——?"

There was a sob in her voice. She stared hard at the dusty road which lay at her feet.

Jack sat very still. He was horrified. He felt bitterly ashamed when he remembered that he too had wondered if the little son who had "passed away" had belonged to Lancelot Bellew or to "Mansergh of the Guards." The thought—the doubt—had assailed him many times. He would never have put it into words, but he knew that it would have remained with him—always.

She was right! It was "hideously unfair."

He looked at her. Hot tears were falling — one by one — on her clasped hands. He drew her towards him. They were quite alone. Very gently he kissed away the tears that lay on her soft cheeks.

"Betty — my Betty — won't you believe that all will come right if you will accept my creed as the final word — for good or ill I am your husband, your lover, your children, your all — it is destiny'?"

She leaned her head against his breast and was quite still. Then she pushed him away, lovingly.

"Jack — will you do something for me? Will you promise that we shall have a clear fortnight

to think it all over? One clear fortnight without any meetings — or letters — or anything?"

"You want me to go away for a fortnight?"

"Not to go away — only not to write to me or speak to me, except perhaps at the Casino — now and then."

"The Casino? Never. I hate the place and everything connected with it. If I had my way you would never enter those beastly rooms again."

"Well—never mind—a fortnight will soon pass, and then we can try and decide something. I want you to promise to think and think and think—about everything—and every one—past and present." She said the last words hurriedly. He caught her face in his hand and held it up so that he could look into her eyes.

"Betty — what do you mean by 'present'? Tell me! The truth — the absolute truth."

She was silent.

He loosed his hold on her flushed face, but his eyes still held hers.

"Tell me the truth — is it Ourmansky? In any sense?"

She shook her head.

"Not in any real sense, but of course we're good friends and he admires me — a good deal."

"And you like him to admire you?"

"I have always liked people to admire me." She spoke defiantly. Some of the bitter feelings which had possessed her on the terrace of the hotel had returned. She was miserable and despairing; and misery and despair had given birth to defiance. Jack Helstan's face was livid. His burning eyes devoured her face. He looked hard, almost cruel.

"Betty! Let us understand each other. You don't wish to see me for the next fortnight - well, so be it. But you shall not speak to Prince Ourmansky during that time! Heaven knows I don't want to give you one moment of pain -I want you to think it all out and to come to me gladly — because you belong to me — as I belong to you. I don't want to be exacting, but I swear by the God who created me that I will not allow you to give as much as a smile to that Russian brute. I cannot have it, Betty - I cannot. I am jealous. I confess it. I glory in it. I'm jealous of every one who speaks to you - I hate any living soul to touch you except myself. I want every bit of your dear precious body for my very own — I want all your smiles — all your sweet words all your laughter. I'm jealous beyond expression, and I tell you there are things I could not forgive - I could never forgive you if after this you had anything to do with Ourmansky. You must give up his acquaintance at once and forever. You must, my darling — for my sake and for your own. Promise, sweetheart — promise ——"

She looked at him. For a second her heart seemed to stand still. Then she forced a smile.

"What a tyrant you are! But of course I promise — only you mustn't expect me to be rude to him."

"Why not come down to the Bristol? It isn't so fashionable as the Paris, but it's much safer."

Betty burst out laughing.

"Oh Jack—Jack! And that's how you would keep our 'free fortnight'! What a boy you are—just a big masterful boy!"

He joined in the laugh.

"I suppose it wouldn't quite do, but I do so hate your being at the Paris alone. All sorts of queer people stay there."

"All sorts of nice people too! That handsome American woman, Mrs. Wainright, for example. I'm sure she's correct enough for anything. I've seen her talking to your father and to your friend with the white hair and green eyes."

"I wish you knew Mrs. Wainright——" He stopped abruptly. Then went on. "Well, never mind—that will be all right very soon. Meantime, I'll keep my eye on you, even if I'm not per-

mitted to speak — or write! I suppose I shouldn't break any important rule if I sent you a flower or two — now and then?"

She shook her head.

"Perhaps — I'm not sure, but I do love flowers!"
Then with a quick change of manner she added,
"A propos of flowers — are you going to the Battle
of Flowers at Nice the day after to-morrow? They
say it's going to be very brilliant."

Jack looked down at her. He loved to watch the color coming and going in her soft cheeks. He adored the dark shadows cast on those cheeks by her long lashes. He was feeling very happy.

"Why, yes," he said. "I believe we are going—quite a lot of us. My father has never seen a Battle of Flowers, and Senator Willard, the man with the white hair and green eyes, has taken seats in one of the Tribunes. I wish you could come with us!"

"But I can't, you see! All the same I may go over alone, in a humble voiture! Will you throw me a flower or two if I join the procession?"

"I'll smother you in the finest violets the Riviera can supply!"

They both laughed. Then Betty asked, rather sharply —

"What do you mean by 'quite a lot of us'? Who is going in Mr. Willard's party?"

For a moment Jack hesitated. Then he said, quickly —

"Mrs. Wainright and my father and, I think, Mrs. Ellerby and her daughter."

" Ah \_\_\_\_"

Betty's face changed. The mischievous smile vanished.

"The young lady who pretended to faint a little time ago at La Turbie, and the old lady who was so very, very angry with you for inviting me to tea?"

"Betty — darling — would you rather that I didn't go with them — to Nice, I mean? I don't care a straw about the affair — I was only going because dear old Dad said he'd like to have me with him."

"You think I'm jealous of the young lady who fainted at a convenient moment?"

"Betty!"

"It would be quite reasonable, for she certainly means to marry you — if she can. But jealousy isn't one of my faults — probably because I'm so conceited."

He looked at her. She clasped her hands together as if in prayer.

"If you please, Mr. John Helstan - forgive me

— I'm sorry! And we'll all take part in the Battle of Flowers. You in your Tribune — I in my modest *voiture*. It will be fun, and I shall feel free to pelt you with flowers even though we may not exchange a single word!"

#### CHAPTER XV

THE following afternoon at three o'clock Dr. Helstan was in his room preparing to go and pay a visit.

Senator Willard had taken Jack to Cannes to spend the day. They were not to return until late that evening. The old man was making his preparations methodically, as was his wont: nevertheless he was a little disturbed. He was accustomed to going straight ahead when any special line of action seemed good to him, but this particular visit presented some difficulties. He arranged his necktie carefully and gave a final touch to his black coat with a hard brush. He was still a bit of a dandy in his own simple way.

He was going to call on Mrs. Bellew.

Ever since his arrival at Monte Carlo he had been interested in "that pretty creature." He had often watched her, quietly, at the Casino. He had been attracted by her joyous smile and lovely confiding eyes — those eyes which reminded him strangely of the dear eyes which he had closed so lovingly years and years ago. In some vague

way Mrs. Bellew reminded him of his wife, and for that reason, if for no other, he would have felt interested in her. But there were other reasons. He had been moved to anger when Mrs. Wainright told the story of that broken life. It was a crying shame. The pretty creature had been deserted in her hour of great need by those who should have protected her. She had been a great sinner — true. But what had the Master said about just such another sinner — "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And who, if Mrs. Wainright's story was correct, had been the first to "cast a stone"? The miserable husband who had been unfaithful to her from the first.

Each time Dr. Helstan thought over that story he was filled with anger. She had been greatly to blame. No doubt about that. But she had been so young. Inexperienced. In all probability fiercely tempted. It was a crying shame. The vehement old man felt so strongly about the action of Mrs. Bellew's former friends that he had declined, and abruptly, to make the acquaintance of Sir Henry Chaplin when Mrs. Wainright had suggested a possible meeting.

He had made up his mind to go himself to Mrs. Bellew because he knew it to be his duty to protect and advise any "stray lamb" which might come under his notice. But he had another reason. He felt he owed her a voiceless apology. He had suspected her — and his son.

He had allowed horrible thoughts and suspicions to take possession of him the night that telegram came from San Remo.

His after-relief had been so immense that he had hardly known how to bear it, but the knowledge remained with him that his son was very well acquainted with Mrs. Bellew and that he had concealed the fact. He felt greatly concerned about "that poor pretty creature." The friendship of a young man—his son, for example—could not benefit her. It might easily lead to misunderstanding. Jack was terribly impulsive. He was obstinate—self-opinionated. Not a safe friend for a beautiful, friendless woman.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

He had been quite crafty—"foxy" he himself would have said—in his choice of an hour for his visit. He had watched Mrs. Bellew carefully. He knew that as a rule she left the Casino about one o'clock and did not return before four. He concluded that she remained in the hotel between these hours. The hands of the big clock on the front of the Casino pointed to a quarter past three when the sturdy figure in black broadcloth presented itself at the bureau of the Hôtel de Paris.

The chef de reception looked at him in some surprise. Then he looked at the card which was handed to him when he said that Madame Bellew was in the hotel. The card bore Dr. Helstan's printed name. Underneath there were two lines of small, very neat writing. "I shall take it as a favor if Mrs. Bellew will grant me a short interview."

Something like a smile stole over the *chef de* reception's white face. He bent down to conceal it. Then he gave the card to a page-boy, with whispered instructions.

Dr. Helstan looked unconcerned and friendly. The *chef* politely invited him to take a chair while he was waiting. He spoke excellent English, and the old man asked him several questions about the number of rooms in the hotel — the length of the season, and so on.

There was a considerable delay. Then the page-boy returned and requested the visitor to go up to "the salon of Madame." The chef de reception bowed low when the old clergyman gave him a friendly salute. He looked after the well-set figure until it disappeared into the ascenseur. The smile he had been restraining broke loose.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Betty was reading a novel when the card was brought to her. She stared at it in utter amazement. The ever-ready flush flooded her cheeks. She felt bewildered. Angry. Very much inclined to send down a curt refusal. What did it mean? Had Jack really gone the length of speaking to his father about her?

She felt unnerved. She would not see this old man.

Then she remembered his kindly smile — that wonderful, heavenly smile. Above all she remembered Why Not?

The little essay had meant so much to her.

She spoke to the boy. He disappeared.

She looked round hastily. In three, four minutes Jack Helstan's father would be in the room. She ran to the table and seized the picture of "John Helstan, author of A Woman of To-morrow." She put it away in the table drawer — then drew it out again. No! Let it stay there. If the old man wondered, let him wonder.

It was a warm afternoon. She was wearing a simple white cashmere dress. She had been resting; her lovely hair was drawn back carelessly and fastened, low on her head, with an ornamental comb. She looked very girlish.

The door opened. The old man came in.

For a second the inquisitive page-boy lingered. Then the door was softly closed.

Betty stood quite still in the middle of the room. She felt so nervous that she called defiance to her aid. Dr. Helstan stood and looked at her. Then he came to her side and held out his hand.

"It is kind of you to receive me. I am very grateful."

He was smiling. Betty stared at him. She did not give him her hand. She pushed forward an arm-chair and motioned to him to take it. He drew forward another for her and then sat down. For a moment neither spoke. Betty was keenly aware that Dr. Helstan's chair faced the writing-table on which the portrait was standing. She waited for him to remark on it, but he had no such intention. He leaned back comfortably and smiled at her.

"I expect I've surprised you — this visit, I mean — but I've long wished to make your acquaintance, and to-day I determined to pay you a visit."

"You have wished to know me - why?"

He was casting a spell over her. How could one feel angry or resentful face to face with that beaming personality — under the influence of that friendly smile? She was very nervous, but she was conscious that she did not now feel resentful. Was he a magician, this strange old man? What was it that made him so different from any other person she had ever met?

He leaned forward and rested his hands on his knees.

"Mrs. Bellew," he said, "I'm of opinion that it saves trouble and makes misunderstanding impossible to clear decks before action. You may think I have no right to intrude on you in this way, but I hold that I have a right. We're both the children of the same Father, therefore we aren't strangers, and my black uniform allows me to set aside social conventions when necessary. I've an idea — indeed, I'm quite certain — that you're in need of a true friend, and I've come to offer my services. I'm an old man — an old, fairly experienced shepherd. It's my business to give a helping hand to those who need it, and I want to help you — if you'll let me." He was looking straight into her amazed eyes. He saw a gleam of anger creeping in. He went on quickly. "I don't want to try and force your confidence. Take your own time, only keep me in mind. I've heard a good deal about you - I've heard enough to convince me that you need a real friend, and I came here to-day to tell you that I'd be greatly honored if you would make use of me."

"Dr. Helstan — what do you know of me? What have you heard — and from whom?"

"I've heard a very sad story. I'm not betraying any special confidence when I say that it came

straight from an old friend of yours—a woman who has always liked you—Mrs. Lewis Childers. She told a lady of my acquaintance, a Mrs. Wainright, about you, and through Mrs. Wainright it came to me. I never encourage idle gossip, but as you had interested me very much I begged for particulars."

"I do not see — I quite fail to understand how my life — my affairs — can concern Mrs. Wainright or ——"

She stopped short. Crimson spots flamed in her cheeks. Her mouth was compressed into a hard line.

"Or — me? That was what you were going to say, wasn't it? Quite natural. I came here prepared for a stormy reception, but I'm not easily frightened. I'm a firm believer in the old saying 'If you want to make friends you must show yourself friendly.' Well — I want to try and show myself friendly — that's all."

"'If you want to make friends—'" Betty repeated the words slowly. She was staring at him. "Where did you hear that?"

Dr. Helstan smiled.

"Seems to me I heard it in my cradle. My mother taught it to me almost before she taught me to walk."

"And my father. He used to say that — he used

to say it to me when I was a little, little girl——" She suddenly bent her head, but not before Dr. Helstan had seen the rush of tears. He reached forward and softly patted her shoulder.

"Well — well — isn't that nice? The best possible introduction. Now we're good friends. Now we can have a chat without being disturbed by the lack of social conventions — eh?"

His face was beaming, but Betty did not see it. Tears were falling fast. She kept her head down.

Without any appearance of concern the old man sat back in his chair and took up, one after the other, some books that lay on the writing-table. He glanced at the titles and then laid them down—until he came to the last. A little book in a green cover, carefully mended. He started. He took out his glasses and hurriedly put them on. He looked hard at the title of the little book—Why Not? Then he looked at Betty.

"Why — what have we here? My little essays — and pencil marks ——"

He turned over the pages eagerly.

"You've read them — these fragments? This little book belongs to you, Mrs. Bellew?"

She looked at him suddenly. Her eyes were full of tears, but behind the tears there was eagerness.

"You believe it? You really believe it — I mean Why Not?"

He looked at her steadily.

- "Yes," he said. "I believe it. I think I may say that I know it to be true."
  - "How can you know?"
- "Because the dear Lord Jesus has permitted me to rest on that beautiful knowledge."
- "'The dear'—oh, yes—that's easy to understand. You are good—a great saint—it's natural that you should feel certain, but—other people—"
- "My poor child what are you saying? I a great saint? Far from it. A poor faulty sinner who has found the homeward path by the grace of God." He paused. "Come now tell me all about it. Your father and I were one in thinking that one must be friendly if one wants to make friends. Give me a chance. Let me be your friend. Let me help if I can."

She looked at him. Tears were streaming down her face.

"I want to see him again," she said. "I must. God was cruel — He took him away from me — but even God couldn't be so cruel as to keep him from me — forever."

"Of whom are you speaking?"

"Of my boy — little Jim."

The kindly old face cleared.

"Tell me about him - tell me everything."

"I loved him and they took him from me. It was my fault, of course, but it was cruel. And then I didn't care what I did and I ran away - you know all about that - but I couldn't forget my baby, and I kept on wanting him - always - always. And at last I heard that he had been very ill and that he had been sent to Biarritz to recover, and I disguised myself and went there too. And I used to watch him every day - playing on the sands - such a splendid little fellow with brown legs and his dear hair cropped round his ears - every one noticed him and asked his name, and at last I managed to speak to him, but he didn't know who I was — then. And he hated the governess they had sent to take care of him — he used to creep away and talk to me about her — on the sands — he used to call me 'Dearie,' and at last - I ran away with him."

She stopped short. Her breath came and went in gasps. Dr. Helstan's eyes were fixed on her flushed face. His interest was unconcealed.

"Yes? And then —?"

"Then I got him down to Seville—in the south of Spain, you know, and we had a lovely time—at first. He loved me! Yes—" she spoke vehemently. "He loved me! I made him happy, and that was more than they could do. It was like

Heaven, but then — he caught cold — he really had been very ill — and — that was the end."

"He passed away from you?"

"He drooped — withered — like a lovely little white flower. Then he died ——"

"Then he lived."

The old man's voice was resonant. It carried with it certain conviction. Betty caught his hands.

"You believe that? You believe that I shall see him again — one day?"

"I know that your boy lives. As to your seeing him again ——"

He looked at her gravely. She shivered.

"I know what you think — that I don't deserve it — that God won't let me see him again because ——" She stopped abruptly. Then she said defiantly, "Since Jim went away I've done my best — I've been quite straight. People have said things about me — since then — but it isn't true. I've done my best. I've made my own money — at the Casino."

A sound like a smothered groan broke from her listener. Her color rose.

"Of course, you think it's awful — gambling. But after all it's honest. Much more honest than lots of other ways of making money. The Casino would win if it could. If I win I've a right to

the money. It's my own." She seemed to breathe out defiance. Dr. Helstan's eyes were very kindly.

"I see your point. I don't sympathize with it, but that doesn't matter. What matters is your future."

"My future?" She stared at him. "Who cares about my future? What possible future is there for a woman who has a past like mine?"

"A meeting with your little lad is possible. Heaven is possible. And you ask 'who cares'? Our Father cares very much. And I care."

"What becomes of me?" She shrugged her shoulders. Bright red spots flamed on her cheeks. She spoke defiantly. The old man looked at her.

"You poor lonely girl! You doubt me — you even doubt our loving Father. And yet you know that He is taking care of your little lad? Doesn't anything prompt you to try and make friends with Him?"

"' Make friends' - with God?"

"Yes. That's just what we all have to do if we want to be happy and safe. Why are you afraid? Do you think He doesn't understand—doesn't sympathize? Why—Our Father is just longing to be your friend. Longing to help you. He is knocking at the door of your heart even

now — at this moment. Are you going to deny Him? Doesn't the thought of your boy make you want to make friends with his Friend?"

She uttered a little cry, then sat quite still. Dr. Helstan watched her.

At last she said —

"You want me to repent. To say I'm sorry. Well—I am sorry because I've been stupid and reckless, but I don't believe I'm sorry, except now and then, in the way you mean."

"You are not sorry you have grieved and offended the Father who loves you?"

"I am—in a way—because I want to see Jim again—because I must see him. But that isn't the kind of sorrow you mean."

The old man smiled.

"Come — come — we mustn't split nice healthy straws. It's a vast mistake to worry one's conscience beyond decent limits. We've got on a great way already. You know that the dear Lord Jesus is taking care of your little lad — good care. And naturally you're grateful. Well, the next step won't cost much. Just talk it all out with little Jim's Friend. Tell Him exactly how you feel — how much or how little you feel if you want to be very exact, but — tell Him. Blurt it all out and say you want to make friends."

The beautiful brown eyes searched his face.

"You think I might?"

"My dear, I'm sure you must — if you are ever to see your boy again."

"Do you think——" She stopped suddenly. She looked strongly excited. Dr. Helstan smiled encouragingly. She went on—slowly—

"Do you think I might speak — pray — to Jesus Christ instead of to God? I seem to know Him so much better."

For a moment Dr. Helstan was silent. His whole being expressed a voiceless prayer. Slowly a beautiful, tender smile took possession of his face.

"Why, of course. My dear — I understand. I myself find it easier, very often, to speak to God the Son rather than God the Father. He seems more familiar — more friendly."

Betty leaned forward and timidly touched one of his hands.

"Dr. Helstan — does it matter that I don't see things as you see them — at least, not now? Of course, I know that I've done wrong from the Bible point of view, but I don't feel that I've done much harm, really, to any one except myself."

The old man pressed the timid hand.

"Mrs. Bellew — let me tell you one of the greatest and gravest of all truths. We cannot, however

much we may wish it, sin alone. We cannot live alone. We cannot die alone. We form part of one great family, and we cannot get away from that family. You are my sister because God is the Father of us both. Your example may have an immense influence on me - on any one of those poor men and women who are at this moment trying to snatch away a few pounds from the Casino. If you are strong you will certainly help me, or some other sister or brother, to be strong too. If you are weak - if your thoughts and actions are wrong - you will find the brand of Satan on your breast, for you will be one of his workers. It is a fearful and solemn thought - that of the universal family. Fearful, but wonderfully comforting. If you owe a great deal to me, I, in turn, owe a great deal to you, and if we want to hold our heads high we must both pay up. If I don't give you a helping hand when you need it, there'll be a mark against me in the Great Judgment Book. If I help you to find the downward path, directly or indirectly - what sort of a mark will sully my name? My dear - you dare to say that you have not wronged any one but yourself? What of your boy? What of that innocent baby who drew life from you and who was robbed, almost at his birth, of his guardian-angel - of a good, pure mother? If he had lived - what then?"

"You mean — that he would have been ashamed of me?"

She was sobbing.

"I have known cases in which young men have taken their lives rather than face such shame."

"Oh ——" Betty suddenly covered her face with her hands. "It's cruel — unjust. At my worst I was better than his father."

"Possibly. Quite probably." Dr. Helstan's face showed keen distress. "That brings us to the edge of a very dangerous pit. I hope you won't ask me to try and fathom it - just now. It is one of the terrible mysteries of life - the apparent injustice which divides the sexes. I say 'apparent' because the only real injustice would be the existence of two codes in the mind of God. I do not believe these two codes exist. Our Father is as just as He is loving — He will even the balance in His own good time. But remember that you will not be asked to account for any one's 'talents' but your own. Our Father gave you a little baby - for months you and you alone nourished and cared for that dear child. You brought it into the world. Had you the right to handicap it most cruelly? Had you the right to steal away its birthright - to leave it without that Angel of the House which has been, and is, the guardian of so many men's lives? You need not make an

abstract question of this mystery of the sexes. You need not concern yourself about the justice of it in this case or that. Look within. How did you act towards the tender life that was delivered into your care? What would have been the end if Our Father, in loving kindness, had not taken back His gift?"

"Ah—no—no—not that. Not that. It was not I who killed him—no—not that."

"I do not say it. I have no wish to frighten you, but here, in the presence of Our Father, I ask you whether you were worthy of that dear boy?— What could you have done for him or with him if he had lived?"

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The silence had been long.

Dr. Helstan sat back in his chair, his eyes fixed on his son's pictured face. Now and then his lips moved as though they were forming words.

Betty was still sobbing. But now the sobs came at irregular intervals. At last she looked up. She followed in the track of the old man's eyes. Her cheeks flamed.

She leaned forward and touched the silver frame.

"I know your son," she said. "I know him quite well."

"Yes. I am aware that you know him."

She started violently.

- "You know it? Jack he spoke to you of me?"
- "No." The old man's voice did not betray the least concern. "Jack never told me that he knew you. I chanced to see you together in the woods at Cap Martin."
  - "You saw us?"
  - "Yes."

Betty stared down at the photograph in her hand. Dr. Helstan sat and looked at her. After a moment he said —

"Before I leave you there is just one little thing more that I want to say. I'm greatly concerned about your future. Of course you must abandon this idea of winning money at the Casino. No!"—this in answer to an eager question in her eyes. "I'm not going to scold you about gambling, but I may just say that I do not approve of it." He was smiling. "All the same one must have enough for the necessaries of life, and I've a plan. I have under my control a certain sum of money——" He stopped short and looked at her. Then he went on. "It is the interest on my wife's little fortune, and you remind me of her—a little. You look like her. For this reason, and others, I wish you to use this money for a year or eighteen

months. I've been accustomed in my own mind to calling it my lame-dog fund. Well — you shall be my lame-dog for the next few months, and meantime I'll turn things over and see what we can do to make things easier in the future. You needn't be a bit afraid — not a living soul — not my son or any one else — shall know our little secret. It isn't a big thing — about a hundred pounds a year, but it will be enough. And you must give me or send me an address which will always find you. On the first of each month the money order shall reach you — just until we have had time to turn round."

Betty caught his hands and held them. She could not speak. Then she forced back her sobs.

"No—no——" she said. "Not that—it's impossible."

" Why?"

"Your wife's money — you would give me that — and I — I know your son."

He looked straight at her. Her eyes were full of tears, but they met his fearlessly. He smiled.

"My dear — I know that you and Jack are acquainted. And I am quite sure you would not wish to injure him in any way. I hope that I am equally sure of him."

He stood up and held out his hand. She took it. For a moment they stood face to face.

"You won't forget what you have to do?" he said.

"I'll try. I promise."

He pressed her hand warmly.

"That's right. And when you have made friends with Our Father you mustn't forget to give me a chance. 'If you want to make friends——' you know. Well, all I want is to have a chance of showing myself friendly."

#### CHAPTER XVI

THE day of the first Battle of Flowers at Nice was superb. The sky was brilliantly blue. So unnaturally blue that the Mediterranean Sea looked, in contrast, quite green. There were flowers and garlands of leaves everywhere. Flowers. Flags. Banners. Striped awnings!

Above all there were lovely women clad in fairy-like garments. The very latest thing from Paris.

The whole length of the magnificent Promenade des Anglais was lined with women in summer gowns and flower-wreathed hats. There were many men too — probably thousands — but it was essentially the day of women. Gray tweeds and soft felt hats only served as an effective background for "creations" in satin and muslin and lace.

Dr. Helstan watched the restless crowd with unconcealed interest. Senator Willard had secured a row of front seats in one of the best Tribunes, directly opposite the awned terrace of a specially smart hotel.

There had been a cheery luncheon party at which Mrs. Ellerby had played, quite successfully, the part of "wet blanket." The old lady was in a dangerous mood. That morning her daughter had tried by every secret means in her power to induce her to give up the idea of "such a tiring afternoon." Kate had worked hard and loyally, but her mother had made up her mind to go to Nice. She had also, and of this poor Kate was well aware, made up her mind to be disagreeable. Mrs. Ellerby did not express her intentions in this way, naturally, but that was what it amounted to. She had been filled with an indignation which she felt to be amply justified ever since the afternoon at La Turbie. More than once she had said things about "poor dear Dr. Helstan's son" which had made Kate hot all over. She had been offended - implacably.

Poor Kate!

The all-white costume which had meant so much to her had lost its charm. She was horribly nervous, even frightened. Her mother was "a darling," of course, but ——? There were moments in her life when she found herself envying girls, women, who felt safe — always. She did so dread, hate, anything like a scene. Above all, a scene with Jack Helstan. Her mother was a very well-bred woman, that she, of course, knew. At

the same time well-bred people have been known to do and say extraordinary things in certain circumstances.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Wainright was sitting next to Dr. Helstan. Senator Willard was on her other side. Then came Mrs. Ellerby, Kate and Jack. A very observant person might have noticed that the old clergyman had rather hurriedly placed himself at the end of the row, immediately inviting Mrs. Wainright to sit beside him.

The arrangement of the places might have been purely accidental, but it was certain that deep down in his heart Dr. Helstan found his old friend Mrs. Ellerby just a wee bit tiresome. He used to say, in moments of strict confidence, that he believed she did not quite approve of him — or of many of his ideas.

Mrs. Wainright was talking gaily — pointing out celebrities to the old man — thoroughly enjoying herself. They had taken their seats early, and the course between the wooden fences had not been cleared for the carriages.

People were walking up and down, looking at the lovely butterflies on the hotel terraces or searching for friends in the Tribunes.

Quite suddenly some one spoke to Mrs. Wainright.

"Delighted to see you. What a day.— Ideal — eh?"

It was Sir Henry Chaplin, looking very spruce in a blue serge suit, white waistcoat, crimson carnation and Panama hat. His twinkling eyes took in the party at a glance. He spoke to Mr. Willard and to Jack. Then he looked at the handsome old man whose keen eyes were fixed on him. Mrs. Wainright hesitated. She looked at Dr. Helstan questioningly — almost imploringly.

"May I present a very old friend?" she said.
"Dr. Helstan, this is Sir Henry Chaplin."

The old man lifted his wide-brimmed felt hat and bowed. He did not smile.

Sir Henry seemed about to address a remark to him; then he changed his mind and rattled off some gossip to Mrs. Wainright.

"Yes—that's Lady Granville, on Hule's terrace—Manners, of course, and—yes—Mrs. Lulu Childers. Pretty woman: looks well in that pink gown—eh?"

Dr. Helstan leaned forward.

"Which of those ladies is Mrs. Childers?"

Sir Henry turned to him quickly.

"She's sitting there to the right, sir — close to the blonde lady in white — that's Lady Granville. You know Mrs. Childers, Dr. Helstan? Charming little woman — most amusing."

"I have heard of her."

Dr. Helstan was looking steadily at Mrs. Childers' animated face. Something in his gaze seemed to attract her. She looked across—bowed—waved her hand. Mrs. Wainright waved in return. Just then an Englishman, a friend of Sir Henry, strolled by. He turned—raised his hat—spoke carelessly to his friend.

"Gay scene, this — awfully pretty women, some of them — hard to beat as a show ——"

Sir Henry acquiesced. Mrs. Wainright was talking eagerly to Dr. Helstan. Sir Henry moved away a few paces. He and his companion exchanged remarks about their friends and acquaintances on the hotel terrace. Suddenly the Englishman spoke excitedly.

"By Jove — the plot thickens. Princess Ourmansky!"

He put up his single glass and stared hard at a tall, very slender woman who was just moving to her seat in the middle of the terrace. She was surrounded by men and women who seemed to hang on her words, but she hardly noticed them. Her great black eyes looked weary. She sank into a chair, leaned her arms on the stone balustrade, and stared at the moving crowd. She was dressed entirely in black lace, and though the day was very warm she had a magnificent sable scarf thrown

over her shoulders. Sir Henry was asking eager questions.

Directly behind him Jack Helstan was listening — eagerly — consciously.

"In mourning. Lost her only son — awful blow, they say — won't divorce that brute because she's tremendously religious — they say she's in love with him still."

"God bless my soul!"

Sir Henry Chaplin looked at the dark-eyed woman with unconcealed interest. "He's a regular bad hat — what can the women find in him to like?"

His friend said something in rather a loud voice. Sir Henry caught his arm and pressed it. Then he turned to Mrs. Wainright.

"I see they're beginning to clear the course—I'll say au revoir." He bowed very respectfully to Dr. Helstan and waved his hand to Jack. His friend was staring at the somewhat incongruous party in the front row of that particular Tribune. He was wondering why he had been silenced so abruptly. As the two men walked away together their heads were close together. It was evident that Sir Henry was explaining something.

Jack Helstan looked after them. He was very white.

Kate spoke to him — more than once. He did not hear. She, too, was white and tired-looking.

She busied herself with the little bouquets of flowers which were packed into a basket on her lap.

Mrs. Wainright leaned forward and spoke to her.

"What has happened to that basket of magnificent violets Mr. Helstan bought? I hope it has not been brushed away by those dear eager persons who find so much difficulty in arranging themselves in their seats!"

Kate shook her head.

"It's all right," she said. She glanced towards Jack Helstan. He was just then lifting from the ground a basket of superb violets. It was quite evident that he, in his own mind, separated them from all the other flowers with which they had provided themselves. Kate felt her color rising. She looked down. Her mother looked sharply at Jack, then fixed her eyes on the opposite terrace. Except the most ordinary exchange of greetings she had not addressed a single word to Dr. Helstan's son that day.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Jack was trying hard to control himself.

The mention of that hated name — Ourmansky. It had made him furious. He took himself to task. He was wrong — unfair — unjust. It was not her fault. She had nothing to do with the woman of the tragic eyes who bore that hated name. She had nothing to do with the man.

He told himself that he must learn to control his feelings. Otherwise — she would find him "impossible."

The black mood passed. He smiled secretly as his fingers touched the lovely purple flowers.

The basket was large! It held many, very many, fragrant bouquets.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

There was a sound of trumpets in the distance. Every one leaned forward and arranged their baskets of flowers in the most convenient position. Vendors of roses and mimosa ran down the course, which was now nearly clear, eagerly offering their wares. A wave of excitement swept through the air.

Slowly, with due dignity, the first carriage came in view. There were shouts all down the long line. Flowers were tossed to and fro. The street began to look gay with its floral carpet of red and yellow and half-a-dozen other colors.

The carriage approached. It had been transformed into a huge shell covered with mimosa, and it was filled with eager children. As it crept by a great shout rose from the yellow heart of the shell, and a dozen eager, brown hands flung roses at Dr. Helstan! They were South American children who were staying at the Hôtel Bristol.

Just at first the old man was bewildered. He had

never seen anything of the kind before. He did not know what to do. But Mrs. Wainright filled his hand with roses.

"Throw them!" she said eagerly. "Look — the little darlings — how lovely they are in their white and yellow costumes. Oh, do pelt them, Dr. Helstan — they'll be so disappointed if you don't."

The old man obeyed. He quickly entered into the fun.

The people on the opposite terrace watched the scene with undisguised interest. The old clergyman was a well-known figure at Monte Carlo.

The carriage paused a moment in front of the Tribune. He rose to his feet in his excitement. The children shouted and laughed. Even when the carriage moved on they leaned over the back and pelted their old friend. He sank back, breathless. Mrs. Wainright was enchanted.

"Now you're blooded," she said. "You must keep it up. The Senator has an immense reserve stock of flowers under the seat. Don't be afraid to pelt every one who attracts you!"

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Some of the carriages were works of art. Canopies — tents — shells — huge baskets. All, all, covered with the most exquisite flowers. Several families from the Bristol passed, and each time a familiar face came in view the old man, obedient to instructions, pelted his best. One party of pretty girls in blue and white made a tremendous set at Jack. He had taken very little part in the gay scene, but this time it was necessary for him to defend himself. He stood up and literally rained roses and mimosa on the laughing beauties. It was such a vigorous battle that the other people in the Tribune stood up to get a better view.

Dr. Helstan cheered on his son.

"That's right, Jack — now is the moment — don't spare the flowers — we've lots more!"

The Senator and Mrs. Wainright were radiant with delight. The old man's beaming face was beautiful.

The laughing girls passed on. Jack took off his hat and fanned himself with it. It had been hard work.

The exciting fight had brushed aside his dark thoughts. He was looking happy and particularly handsome.

Mrs. Wainright turned and said something to the old man. He nodded.

"Yes. He's a fine fellow. I'm afraid I'm rather proud of him."

There was a pause. Something had gone wrong in the procession and there was a delay. Senator Willard took the opportunity to replenish the flower baskets. Even Mrs. Ellerby had been

induced to fire a few floral shots. Her basket had to be filled up as well as the rest. Far down the course there was a continued roar—a sound of many voices. Every one leaned forward and tried to see what was happening. The Senator stood up.

"I think it must be some specially gorgeous carriage," he said. "They seem shouting louder than ever. Let us get ready in good time." He was speaking to Jack. The latter nodded and filled his hands with flowers. Kate and Mrs. Wainright did the same. The old man, who was feeling a little tired, leaned back in his seat.

The shouting grew louder and louder. Jack leaned well forward to catch the first glimpse of the coming carriage. He drew back when he saw that it was something specially magnificent.

Several rather ordinary carriages went by slowly. Then there was a sharp trampling of horses' hoofs. The shouts of applause became deafening.

"How extraordinary!"

It was Mrs. Wainright who spoke. She motioned to Dr. Helstan to lean well forward so that he might have a good view.

"Isn't it superb?"

The victorious carriage drew near. It was drawn by three black horses abreast, in Russian fashion, and the driver was a huge Cossack wrapped in furs and wearing a black fox turban. The carriage was high and open. It was literally covered with scarlet japonica blossoms. The magnificent blaze of color was dazzling. The restive horses pranced and swerved. The Cossack held them in purposely. A brilliant sun made the splendid silver harness gleam and glitter.

Jack Helstan stood up. His face was white. He stared at the carriage — at the woman who was leaning back against a mass of scarlet satin cushions.

It was Betty Bellew.

She was dressed in pure white from head to foot. White satin — white lace — soft white ermine.

She looked extraordinary. So beautiful that she hardly seemed human. There was a flood of color in her cheeks — her eyes blazed with excitement — the white of her ermine cap made her hair seem like living gold.

She sat quite still — like an idol on its throne.

In her hands she held a silver basket filled with gardenias. Now and then, mechanically, she threw a flower on this side or that.

As the carriage reached the Tribune the horses were suddenly pulled up. Further down the line there was a delay. For a moment the procession was at a standstill.

Ourmansky touched Betty's arm and spoke. He looked at Jack Helstan — then he laughed outright. The flush on Betty's face deepened. She looked down.

Jack leaned over the rail of the Tribune and stared at her. In his hands he held the great basket of violets.

As the carriage began to move on he flung the flowers on the ground. They lay there and made a great purple stain.

Betty looked at them. She said something—some inarticulate words. The frantic horses bounded on.

For a moment no one in that front row of seats spoke.

They seemed hypnotized.

A curious sound was cutting the air. The sound of determined, implacable hissing.

The Russian carriage was passing Hule's Hotel. The horrible sound came from there.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Senator Willard took off his hat and passed his hand across his forehead. He was horrified.

Only the day before, at Cannes, he had received a confidence. He had been told an amazing, disconcerting secret — which was not long to remain a secret. He had been sympathetic. At least he had tried hard to say the right thing. But he had passed a sleepless night.

How could it end?

That dear splendid old man?

Mrs. Bellew?

He had been amazed, but all that morning he had been blaming himself for his narrow views.

After all — why not?

If all that he had heard of her was true — even half of it, she must have a good heart — a sweet nature.

There would be difficulties, of course. Frightful difficulties. But if she really loved Jack Helstan! Well — the finest of all bridges, where the river of difficulty is concerned, is love.

He tried hard to be hopeful. And now?

Mrs. Wainright turned to Dr. Helstan. She spoke to him. Just at first he did not seem to hear. She looked at Mr. Willard. Then she again turned to the old man.

"You look tired," she said. "Don't you think we might go — now?"

Dr. Helstan looked at her. He was strangely quiet.

"Yes," he said. "I think we might go now—we have seen enough."

He stood up. For a second he rested his hand heavily on the rail of the Tribune. Then he looked round for his son.

But Jack's seat was empty.

#### CHAPTER XVII

ETTY went back to Monte Carlo in a hired automobile which she had found near the station at Nice. She had left Ourmansky suddenly, the moment the gorgeous japonica carriage reached the end of the Promenade des Anglais. He had been very angry. Amazed, violent questions had followed each other rapidly, but she had refused to speak. Then, seeing that she was really looking very ill, he ceased to question her. There was an ugly sneer on his face as he, too, left the decorated carriage and gave some directions to the coachman, one of his most faithful servants. He went to one of his clubs and ordered a bottle of brandy to be brought to him. He was a man of curious habits. At times he drank heavily. At times he drank nothing but mineral waters. He was the master of his vices.

When Betty reached the Hôtel de Paris she went straight to her bedroom. Marie was there. Betty pushed the girl from the room and locked the door.

There was violence in her face and in her movements. For several minutes the servant stood still outside the door — listening. She was frightened. Finally, she crept away and entered into conversation with "Monsieur Pierre."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

For a long time Betty stood still in the middle of the room. Her hands were clenched. She was trembling. Then, gradually, everything seemed to grow very dim. She stretched out her hands—groping for a chair. She touched the slanting back of a couch just as she stumbled and fell forward.

The minutes passed. Half-an-hour — nearly an hour. Still she lay motionless, huddled up on the low couch. On entering the room she had flung off her ermine cap and scarf. They looked like a little heap of snow on the rich red carpet. The room was in shadow, but a gleam of light from a street lamp threw strange silhouettes against one of the white walls.

Betty moved. She opened her eyes. For quite a long time she stared at the dancing figures on the wall. She raised her hands and pressed them against her eyes.

Where was she? What had happened?

Slowly, with horrible sluggish precision, memory awoke.

It all came back to her.

The shouts — the hisses — the stern question in the old man's eyes. The dear, heavenly old man.

A curious trembling movement shook her. She buried her face in the cushions.

Jack!

That horrible purple stain, which had seemed to creep closer — closer to the carriage wheels.

An indelible stain. Not like the stain of blood, which might after much agony be washed away. That great purple stain would remain forever.

She was sobbing feebly. She was so tired — so desperately tired.

The night before she had not slept. All through the long still hours she had been wide awake thinking.

The days when she had been a happy girl. Her married life.

Her successes — the men who had admired her. The end.

It had killed her father — the disappointment and disgrace. She, in some cruel, unthinkable way had killed her baby — darling little Jim.

Yes. She had killed her darling — at least, she had been the cause of his death. People had said

that. She realized at last that it might be true. That it was true. She who had so loved life had caused death to come to those she most dearly loved. Gerry Mansergh. Her father. Jim! All—all—because of her—through her.

She clenched her hands tight. What had he said—that dear old man? "The greatest and gravest of all truths—we cannot live alone—we cannot sin alone—we cannot get away from the family!"

"We cannot live alone - we cannot sin alone."

She repeated the words. Again and again she repeated them, as if she wanted to commit them to memory. "We cannot sin alone."

She had sinned — fearfully.

Her sin had killed life in those she loved. Who would be her next victim?

Jack?

With impotent hands she beat against the cushions.

That - never.

For that would mean a double murder. The sweetest, kindest old man she had ever known—except her father.

The man she loved.

Memory was wide awake at last. She could think clearly. The long, sleepless night had borne

fruit. She had determined to disgust Jack Helstan — to make him hate her — and she had done it.

At least, she had disgusted him. But — did he really hate her — even now?

That purple stain of violets had shown his anger and disappointment, but the look in his eyes?

She knew, only too well, that look of mad desire, that look of fierce determination to gain possession of the coveted object. She knew what it meant.

And could she trust herself?

Her whole body seemed wrapped in flame.

She loved him. Ah—dear God—how she loved him!

And he loved her - still.

He was furious.

He would stay — write — terrible things. But he would not go away. He would not give her up.

She had disgusted him, but that was not enough. Not enough, if she really meant to save the old man's happiness — even his life.

What she had done was not enough.

That was the thought which echoed in her brain.

Not enough — not enough.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

She got up from the sofa. How desperately tired she felt.

She crossed the room and came to the writing-table. She sank heavily into a chair. Leaning forward, she took Jack Helstan's photograph in both hands and stared at it. His eyes smiled at her. His lips seemed to move. Passionately she pressed the pictured face to her lips. She laid her burning cheek against it.

"I love you," she whispered. "I love you — I want with all my heart and soul to be with you — always."

She closed her eyes and sat there — her cheek pressed against *his* cheek — quite a long time. The shaded reading-lamp cast a soft light on the table. It seemed to rest with insistence on a great bowl of violets.

Betty looked up. She saw the purple light—what looked like a purple stain. She uttered a cry—

No! No!

Never.

The truth — what was it?

She could not trust herself. She could not trust him.

If he wanted her — really wanted her — she could not refuse.

And he would want her still.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

She was staring at the photograph.

"Still!"

The word began to haunt her brain.

She had not done enough. There was still something for her to do. She *could* make anything — everything — impossible. She had the power to do it if she had the courage — and the will.

How tired she felt. It seemed a long time since she had slept, since she had eaten anything.

She was so tired that she seemed in a land of dreams. Her head fell forward on her arms.

The darling old man had said "Why not?"

It had been in answer to her fearful question: "Can I hope to see little Jim again?" The old man believed that there was another life—up there in the skies—where little Jim was "living." He had said that. He believed that. And he had spoken of sacrifice. Of "making friends"—with God.

He had said that God — or at least the Lord Jesus Christ — would "understand."

She raised her head.

If she really saved Jack, God would "understand." He would know why she had done — what she meant to do. He would understand. Dr. Helstan would understand — for she was going to write to him. But Jack would never, never understand.

That was her sacrifice. The only sacrifice that would be of any use.

Jack would never, never understand. All his life he would hate her, hate himself for ever having loved her.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Hours later Betty was writing a letter. A long letter. She had had a strange scene with Marie, her maid. She had summoned the girl to her room. Behind locked doors there had been a momentous interview.

Marie had been frightened. She had protested vehemently. Then something of the dramatic spirit of other days had come to her aid. She had consented to a wonderful, terrible proposal. Money, a considerable sum, had passed from hand to hand. Marie had delivered a note, short and brilliant, to the servant who kept guard at the door of the Ourmansky suite. She had handed in the letter and then fled — overcome by terror.

When she came back to her employer's room she again protested, but Betty had silenced her. In the end Marie agreed to everything. She was still frightened, but, like all true Parisiennes, she was a born actress. She loved anything that savored of the theater.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Betty was writing a long letter. It was diffi-

cult. Again and again she put down her pen and sat quite still.

Could she go on with it? Could she?

And then she knew that she must go right on. It was the only way out.

The letter was finished at last.

She put it into an envelope without reading it over. Perhaps if she read it she might not have the courage to send it. She laid it down. Her hand touched the silver frame. A rush of color mounted to her white face. Her eyes filled.

"Jack! Oh — Jack — my darling — my darling!"

Again — again she kissed the picture — passionately — violently. She pressed it against her heart. She whispered to it as lovers whisper to each other in the shadows — when they are quite alone.

Tears fell fast. They lay against the glass of the frame. She brushed them aside, but they fell again. The glass was dim, but what did it matter? Very soon there would be no dear face behind it. Very soon the silver frame would be empty.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

There were silver streaks in the sky. The reading-lamp still burned bright, but the purple shadow on the violet bowl seemed fainter.

The room was quite still.

Betty's arms were stretched out across the table. She was unconscious.

An addressed envelope had fallen to the ground. One of her hands held some torn scraps of pictured paper.

The silver frame was empty.

#### CHAPTER XVIII

THE following night, late, Dr. Helstan was sitting alone in his room, reading a letter. The writing was pretty and intensely feminine, with a quaint little dash on each "t" and a flourish at the end of each sentence. The paper was large and square. It was stamped in silver with an entangled monogram —"B.B."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

He laid the letter down on his knee, took off his glasses and wiped them with his silk handkerchief. Then he wiped his eyes and sat very still.

For a long time he remained motionless. His eyes were fixed on space: but not empty space. He was seeing visions. He was listening to a musical voice. He was in a gay room decked with flowers; a picture of his son stood on the table before him; the "poor pretty creature" was close by.

The letter was from her.

It was long. Amazing. Terrible.

He had hardly had time to realize its full meaning, but he knew that it was magnificent.

He pressed his handkerchief against his eyes. Then he resolutely put it back into his pocket and began to read the letter again.

. . . you will forgive me. You will understand. It's the only way - absolutely the only way to save him. You are so clever, you know so many things, but I don't think you quite know him — I don't think you understand how easily things, dreadful things, happen when two people love each other. And we do. That's the truth that you haven't realized - you could not realize We love each other, and he has never had any thought that was not the best — the most noble. Just at first he did not know about me. But when he did know — when I told him — he wanted to marry me all the same. He never once thought of anything else. And it is impossible. Even you could not see that more plainly than I do. It's impossible. That's why I'm going to cut myself adrift from him - forever. There's no other way. Believe me when I say this. I know! Of course he was angry about the battle of flowers. He was disgusted and furious, but he wrote to me that very night. Such a dear angry letter. He hated what I had done, but he didn't hate me. And I did it because I thought it would make him hate me. You understand, don't you? Dear Dr. Helstan, you understand? I know now that you were right when you said we cannot sin alone — even live alone. If we do wrong we have to injure some one. It's an awful thought, but I know that it's true. And I have done so much wrong. I have hurt so many people — even my baby. You see why I must pull up. I dare not do any more harm — such dreadful harm. I've thought it all out, and I know that there's only one way. I'm going to take it. To-morrow morning every one in Monte Carlo will hear that I have gone to Italy with Prince Ourmansky — gone to his villa at Rome. All the newspapers will talk of it — he will hear it — at once. And he will never forgive. It's the one thing beyond his forgiveness — quite beyond it.

"Dr. Helstan — believe me when I say that it's the only way out. Jack loves me — I love him. We might vex and hurt each other most terribly, but he would come to me — I should go to him — in the end — if it were possible. But after this it will be impossible. Impossible. You understand? Surely you must understand? I cannot tell you what I really feel about Jack — I can't talk about him much — just as I can't talk about my baby. When you love something very much you can't talk about it — at least not much. I'm doing what must seem to you frightful, but it's because I must make something far more frightful impossible. You understand?

"Dear Dr. Helstan, you have been so kind to me. No one except my father has ever been so kind. I thank you from my heart. And I'm going to try and 'make friends'—you know what I mean. I have told HIM everything—everything. Far more than I dare tell you. And I mean to go on trying.

"I am not really going to Italy — that, of course, you have already understood. It sounds a theatrical plan, but I've been able to arrange it quite well. Marie, my maid, is rather like me. Wrapped up for motoring no one would know the difference. Of course, Prince Ourmansky will find out the truth before he goes very far, but he will never tell. He is too vain. And Marie will be all right. I've given her plenty of money, and she'll go back to her family until she gets another place. It's theatrical, but my life has always been theatrical. And it's the only way. Ourmansky made a big bet, I know he did, that I would leave Monte Carlo with him. Well, he will win that bet. And he will never tell the truth. You see? It's all quite easy and it's certain. The only certain way out. Jack must be saved. If he married me it would ruin him. If he did not marry me ---? You see? Something had to be done. I had to cut myself adrift because I couldn't trust myself. That's the truth. I couldn't trust myself. Because I love him too much.

"Dear Dr. Helstan, I shall never forget what you said about that money. I love to think of it — because you said it was money which belonged to Jack's mother. It was such a beautiful thought — thank you — thank you. But it isn't necessary. When this letter reaches you I shall be on my way to Paris. I'm going straight to a little pension in the rue Balzac - the Villa Léon. It belongs to a dear old woman who used to be my mother's housekeeper. She loves me. She will arrange something for me. I shall be quite safe with her. Don't write to me. Don't send me any money please. I shall not need it. But some day - in three or four years — when he is happy and things are settled - perhaps I shall see you again? I shall want to see you, for you have been so good to me. I shall never forget you. Never. You are such good friends with God, will you tell Him about me - ask Him to understand? Good-by. Thank you again and again. From my heart thank you.

"BETTY BELLEW."

The white sheets of paper were wet with tears. The old man had forgotten to wipe his eyes. He was shaken.

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Never since the day when he had stood and looked down into the dark, hideous hole which held

his wife's coffin had he felt so shaken. He was trembling.

As he leaned back and closed his eyes he seemed again to see that dark hole in the earth. Some one had thrown flowers on the coffin, but the flowers had not hidden it.

She was down there — his darling. The Angel of his House. The dear companion and friend for whom he had waited and worked through many years and then enjoyed, in full, such a cruelly short time.

He remembered that he had tried hard to realize that she was not really down there—that she was safe and happy in the presence of her loving Father in Heaven. He had tried so hard, but he had not succeeded—for a long time. And it was his baby's fingers which had helped him to succeed. Jack's little chubby fingers twisted aimlessly round his strong hands. Jack's helpless cry—his need for constant care. His darling wife had given her life in exchange for the life of her baby. And now——?

He pressed his hands against his eyes. Then he took up the letter and stared at it.

The little pitiful postscript.

"I think it will come right — after a little time. I think he will marry Miss Ellerby. I think so. I'm almost sure."

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

The familiar words seemed to take form before his eyes. "Lay down his life." What did that mean, "his life"? That which was vital. "That which had inestimable value. That which could not be replaced.

The loose sheets of paper fell from his hands. He sat quite still. He had preached from that text—very often. He loved it. But had he ever lived it, until now?

Poor sinful child—it was her "life." Never for a moment did it occur to him to doubt her love for the man she was determined to "save." There was sincerity in her letter. There was sincerity in her heart.

She had sinned desperately, but she was trying to "make friends" with her Father.

The old man felt certain that already she had succeeded in "making friends."

She had been sorely tempted. She had been weak — sinful. But she had come back humbly to the foot of the Cross. She had deliberately made the great sacrifice. She had given her "life."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Every night before going to bed Dr. Helstan

had a habit of reciting, softly, the great Love Chapter. The thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians.

His lips — they were still trembling — moved. The well-known words formed themselves unconsciously. "... Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. ... For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face ... but the greatest of these is charity."

"The greatest of these ——?"

He sighed heavily.

The way of the Christ was difficult.

He had always known that. Now he realized it. The dying Christ on the Cross had found it easy to say, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." The dying thief repented, and that was the verdict of the Christ.

"To-day!" Everything washed out. Everything forgiven — in a single moment.

He rose from his chair, supporting himself against the wooden back. He felt very weary and old.

For quite a long time he stood and looked into space.

Then he walked slowly across the room and knelt down by his bed.

#### CHAPTER XIX

MONTE CARLO was quivering with delicious excitement.

It had been a dull season. No colossal wins. No suicides worth speaking of in the newspapers. Magnificent weather — yes. But then the weather at Monte Carlo is always magnificent!

Over the petit déjeuner — in the Place — in the cue of eager gamblers waiting for the Casino doors to open, one subject and one only was discussed. The departure of Prince Ourmansky and Mrs. Bellew, together! "En route for the Villa Ourmansky, Rome!"

Every one said that of course it was inevitable. "Certain to happen." Nevertheless, some people, quite a good many, were surprised.

When Mrs. Childers read the news in a single page gazette, brought to her in triumph by Lady Granville, she said violent things. Then, suddenly, she pushed her friend out of the room and burst into tears.

When Sir Henry Chaplin read the news he had a bad moment. There was no special reason why

he should be surprised, that he told himself: and yet he was surprised. He was horrified. Curiously, bitterly disappointed.

He had built up a nice little edifice of hopes, founded on a certain dependable look in dark eyes which had met his so frankly on the terrace at La Turbie. "It would hardly have done"—he knew that. All the same the son of such a well-known man as Dr. Helstan might have ventured, if he had really been seriously disposed. "It was the deuce of a pity for pretty little Betty to pick up a brute like Ourmansky—at the end."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

It was Senator Willard who brought the news to Jack. He did not try to "break" it. He just stated the fact that Mrs. Bellew had left Monte Carlo with Prince Ourmansky—the previous evening. That they had left *en auto*.

He and Jack were standing together on the Boulevard in front of the Hôtel Bristol when he made the announcement. He tried to speak calmly, but he knew that his voice was unnatural. He leaned over the wall and stared down at the beach.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

For a long time there was silence.

Jack Helstan stood with the newspaper in his

hands. He had read the malicious insolent words again — and then again. They were stamped on his brain. "A modern romance — a fairy Prince — captured Beauty — an automobile filled with flowers, etc., etc." And then came a florid description of the Villa Ourmansky, at Rome — the gorgeous home of a man of boundless wealth.

He held the paper in his hands and stared at it.

Then, after a long time, he crumpled it up and flung it into the road. He turned and walked quickly up the hill towards the Casino.

Mr. Willard followed.

When they came to the already crowded Place du Casino Jack Helstan went straight to the Hôtel de Paris. He mounted the steps, entered and asked at the bureau for Mrs. Bellew.

The chef de reception looked at him. He smiled. With perfect courtesy he said, "Madame Bellew has left the hotel."

Something in the dark set face made Senator Willard lay his hand on his friend's arm. It was a warning touch. Jack looked at him. Then he turned again to the smiling man in the bureau.

"Kindly give me Mrs. Bellew's address."
The man looked down. He hesitated. Then his

smile deepened. He wrote some words on a card and handed it to Jack.

"This is the only address we have, Monsieur."
On the card was written—

"Madame Bellew,
Villa Ourmansky,
Rome."

They were back on the Roulevard de la Conda.

They were back on the Boulevard de la Condamine.

Quietly, but with determination, Mr. Willard had led the way. Neither of the men had exchanged a single word as they walked down the hill. But when they again stood by the low wall which frames the bay the American said, very quietly—

"I'm afraid it was inevitable."

Jack looked at him.

"You think she loves that beast?"

Mr. Willard was silent. Then at last he said —

"He is enormously rich."

" Yes."

Jack Helstan thrust his hands into his pockets and stared at the ripples of brilliant light on the water. He looked like a man who had received a death blow, but who was determined to die standing. The American felt desperately nervous. It was unnatural. If the young man had burst into vehement words—if he had been violent and unmanageable it would have been natural. But this?

He felt really frightened; and his fears increased when a man's voice spoke his name. It was Dr. Helstan. The old man, bare-headed, had crossed the road. He was standing close to them. In his hand he held a newspaper. Senator Willard took a step or two forward. He stood between father and son. Dr. Helstan smiled. There was a look on his face which Mr. Willard had never seen there before. In its calm sweet dignity it seemed like the face of a pictured saint. Jack took no notice of his father. He stood still and stared out over the water.

For a long moment there was silence. Then Dr. Helstan laid his hand on his son's arm.

"Come up to my room, Jack. And you, Senator. I have something to say to you both."

The violence for which the American had longed suddenly sprang into life. There was fury in Jack's eyes. A flame of vehement hate. He said something. The words were inarticulate, but the look on his face was unmistakable. Mr. Willard looked imploring.

"Not just now — I think. Later on, if that will suit you — Dr. Helstan?"

The old man smiled.

"Now," he said. "I have something to say which must be said now."

Jack shook his head, violently; but the old man insisted.

"Come," he said; and there was something in his tone which forced obedience.

They crossed the road and entered the hotel. When they reached the staircase Jack stood still. He had come to an end of self-control. He felt that if the old man spoke of *her* he must kill him.

Dr. Helstan mounted the stairs instead of taking the ascenseur. At the bend he turned and again spoke the single word, "Come."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

The old man shut and locked the door.

Then he came close to his son and laid his hands on the broad shoulders.

"You love her?"

Jack made a violent movement. He did not actually strike his father, but his movement was so rough that the old man staggered. Senator Willard rushed forward.

"Dr. Helstan — I implore you. Not now. Later on — but not now."

The old man waved him away, very kindly. He was breathless. He shook his head and smiled.

"What I have to say must be said now, Senator. Jack hates me, or thinks he does. That doesn't matter. I want him to answer my question."

"What do you know about — Madame Ourman-sky?"

The sneering words broke from Jack. His clenched hands were trembling.

"I don't know Madame Ourmansky at all. I asked you if you loved Mrs. Bellew?"

"When she was Mrs. Bellew — yes! With all my heart and soul and body. More than I love any other creature in the world. I would have gone to her — lived with her — died with her — if I had had to go over your dead body — you who are my father — you who could never understand."

"Helstan!"

The Senator spoke the single word in agony. He walked to the door and turned the handle. It did not open.

"I have the key, Senator."

The old man's face was calm and beautiful. His son's violent, horrible words did not seem to have disturbed him. It even seemed that they had made him happy.

With a firm step he went to the writing-table and took out a letter. He handed it to the American.

"Please read this aloud, Senator. Right through — right to the end."

Mr. Willard glanced fearfully at the white sheets of paper. Then he turned to the signature. He uttered a cry of amazement. Then he gave back the letter.

"No. No. Impossible. This is not my affair. I have no right to unveil secrets — not my own secrets. I beg of you to excuse me, Dr. Helstan. I really must insist."

He again walked to the door. But the old man shook his head.

"I also 'insist,' Senator. And this is my room. You will do me a great favor if you read aloud that letter — from the first word to the last."

Jack came to the Senator's side. He caught sight of the familiar writing. He seized the sheets of paper roughly. Dr. Helstan thrust aside his arms.

"No, Jack. It is the Senator who must read that letter—he must read it aloud and you must listen."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Senator Willard began to read.

At the first words Jack caught his father's arm and stared into his face.

"You know her?" he said. "You know her?"

"I know her quite well, Jack."

There was a moment of hideous silence. The concentrated fury in the young man's eyes was dreadful, but he held himself back. What he had to say — or do — could wait.

Senator Willard read aloud, slowly.

He read on to the end. He even read the pitiful little postscript.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Jack Helstan saw letters of fire on the wall. He watched them steadily. They formed themselves into words. "I am not really going to Italy — that, of course, you must have understood!" A crimson flame caught the letters and made them brilliant — dazzling. "I am not really going to Italy — when this letter reaches you I shall be in Paris — the Villa Léon."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Jack suddenly buried his head in his arms. The old man looked at him. Then he turned to the American.

"You must excuse my insistence, Senator.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Father!"

<sup>&</sup>quot;My boy!"

You've seen so much that it was necessary for you to see, and know, the whole truth. That poor girl took a desperate 'way out,' but I expect her deceit will be forgiven. I for one forgive it. It's a strange affair, but there it is. I wonder if you could come to Paris with us—this evening? I'd enjoy your society, and from this on we must have everything above board. No hole-and-corner business."

"You are going to Paris — this evening?"
Senator Willard looked absolutely amazed. The old man smiled.

"Why, my dear sir, who do you think is going to perform the marriage service? Do you imagine that I'm too old and feeble to do my duty?"

"Marriage?"

"Yes. My son's marriage with Mrs. Bellew." The old man walked quietly to the table and laid his hand on the bowed head.

"We'll have a tough time of it—that's certain. But you'll stand by, Senator. And we must gather in that nice Mrs. Wainright and one or two others. I'm all in favor of quiet weddings, but we shall have to give the newspapers something to print—just as a set-off for the lies they printed this morning."

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

Dr. Helstan was taking a cup of tea in the hall. He was sitting with Senator Willard, waiting for the arrival of the omnibus. The American thought that a light from Heaven must be shining straight on that calm old face. It was beautiful.

They had been speaking of ordinary things. Then, suddenly, the old man said —

"I've often grumbled about the slow progress of Christianity, but I begin to understand it. I tell you, Senator, it isn't easy to be a working Christian."

Mr. Willard smiled.

"I quite agree. But — you were thinking ——?"

"I was realizing that it's a good deal easier to preach Christianity than to be a real Christian—that's to say, a follower of Christ. I believe that hardly any of us realize that repentance, when it's real, washes out the stain—right out. We all enjoy being in a position to forgive. We linger over the business—make a luxury of it. Tell me, Senator—do you suppose that the Master went on forgiving the repentant thief—when they both reached Paradise? Do you suppose He ever remembered the sins which had been wiped out—much less alluded to them?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Dr. Helstan."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Just so! Didn't I tell you that it's mighty hard

to be a *real* Christian? And it's because we, most of us, aren't 'real' that the progress is so slow. We must buck up, Senator. We must see to it that we're really following in His steps — even if we're only staggering along."

#### CHAPTER XX

BETTY was sitting in a wicker arm-chair by an open window in the neat but rather shabby room which represented her "boudoir" at the Villa Léon.

She was feeling desperately tired.

All the morning she had been making a brave effort to seem content, even happy. She and "dear old Penny Brownlow" had been hanging up pictures and tying on ribbon bows and making elaborate crinkle-paper covers for two large pots of ferns which occupied proud positions on shaky black pedestals. Miss Brownlow was determined to make "the blue suite"—her own title for the two communicating rooms on the second floor in which she had installed her idol—"very chic!" She had stealthily snatched an ornament here and a picture there. Her "guests" were good-natured—they would not mind; perhaps they would never miss the stolen treasures.

It had been an exciting morning for Penny Brownlow. She had been consumed by loving curiosity, but she had not asked questions. If the beautiful woman she worshiped consented to remain with her a year - all her life - she would never ask a question. All the same she was wildly excited, eaten up by wholly natural curiosity. She was a tremendous novel reader. Her regular subscription to a famous lending library in the rue de Rivoli represented the luxury of her busy life. At night, often very late, when every one in the house had eaten and drunk and scolded and made unreasonable requests as much as he or she wanted, Miss Brownlow used to creep softly up to her room on "the fourth," lock the door, light a reading-lamp which had a fascinating pink shade, make a cup of strong tea, and — slip out into the beautiful land of dreams! With her favorite heroes and heroines she felt she really lived. the rest was mere existence.

And now she had under her roof a real heroine. The most wonderful and lovely heroine that ever existed, even in the brain of a "shocker" writer. She, of course, knew a great deal about Betty's life. And over and above what she knew she imagined! It was dreadful, some of it—of course. No one could say it was right, but all the same—

Miss Brownlow had helped to unpack the trunks
— only two, for Betty had given Marie all her

more costly gowns and hats. But the dainty things which remained had given Penny Brownlow a sleepless night. To think of wearing such laces and muslins—really wearing them—on ordinary occasions—every day! She had looked up some favorite chapters in one of Ouida's most florid novels and had compared reality and fiction. In her opinion the real things which she had handled and put away—oh, so carefully!—in drawers spread with white tissue papers were far more beautiful and mysterious than any of those worn by Ouida's heroines—except, perhaps, "Princess Napraxine"?

Penny felt the position to be frightfully exciting. She had unconsciously assumed a new air of importance. She had even put on, "for déjeuner," her best lace blouse, which was slightly décolleté at the throat. Her "guests," chiefly dark-haired wanderers from insignificant South American towns who were glad to live "in the best quarter" for seven francs a day, had at once remarked on the gorgeous garment and had asked questions. Miss Brownlow's answers had been models of discretion. She was entertaining, "at the moment," the daughter of an Irish aristocrat—"one of the Beresfords of Castle Martin—Madame Bellew was occupying the blue suite—

she would, of course, take her meals in her own rooms."

The dark-skinned guests had been immensely impressed. Not a single word had been said about missing pictures — or even chairs.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Betty was staring up at the little patch of blue sky visible between stacks of high chimneys. How pale it seemed, and how small!

Could it really be true that somewhere — down there — the sky was richly blue and the sea gilded? That the sun — a real sun — was shining on brilliant flowers and white walls? That there was music and laughter and a ceaseless echo of gay voices?

It seemed impossible.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Betty turned in her chair and faced the faded blue walls of her "boudoir."

She was grateful. Oh, yes, she was truly grateful for all "dear old Penny's" love and kindness. She was safe—now. She had time to think—plenty of time.

And she was going to think. She was going to begin life again. She was going to work — to support herself — somehow.

Her mind was made up definitely. She told herself that over and over again. And she was glad to be at the Villa Léon — with "dear old Penny." If she was not feeling so desperately tired she could better realize how glad she felt.

It was often like that, she told herself. When people were tired, really worn out, they found it almost impossible to see things in a true light. Fatigue—or something—made things seem upside down. Very soon—probably to-morrow—she would be quite normal.

She had been so thankful to arrive at the Villa, the day before. The journey up had been a long nightmare. She had cried for hours—cried and slept uneasily—then cried again. It had been a nightmare, and Penny's plain old face had been like the face of an angel. How delicious the coffee and fresh rolls, brought to her bedside, had seemed. And then she had clung to the loving old woman and closed her eyes wearily. She had slept!

All through the day. Far into the night. She had slept.

And when the tired northern sun crept in through the shrouded windows she found Penny at her bedside again — with a daintily prepared petit déjeuner and "all the new magazines."

She had felt ever so much better while she had been helping to "make the rooms homey." She had been a little excited — even hopeful.

But now?

She was alone.

The new life was about to begin.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Some one knocked on the door. Betty crossed the room and opened it. An English maid — Miss Brownlow had a very low opinion of French servant morals — held out a big sheet of white paper carefully pinned at the ends. "With Madame's love, please, ma'am."

Betty smiled and took the packet. She went back to her chair and opened it.

Violets!

Dark purple violets. Masses of them lying loose on the sheet of white paper. The idea had been an inspiration — Miss Brownlow felt certain of that. "Othmar" had presented violets in quantities, quite loose, to "Princess Napraxine." She felt the idea to be deliciously poetic.

Betty sat and stared at the purple flowers. And as she stared her expression changed. Her beauty seemed to fall away from her as a veil falls from a face. All that was left was a broken, desperately weary woman.

Her eyes filled. A sob broke in her throat. She stretched out her arms across the table and covered her face with her hands.

The violets lay on the polished floor. They made a little purple carpet round the motionless figure.

Betty stirred. She opened her eyes and looked at the little flowers. But she made no attempt to pick them up — even to thrust them aside.

What was the good?

All her life there would be a purple stain on her heart. He had said, "I mean to smother you in violets." Well, he had done it. The touch of them, the smell of them, suffocated her. They were like a pall laid across the face of a living woman.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Again some one knocked, but this time the door was opened quickly from the outside. Miss Brownlow came in. She was breathless.

"My dear — my dear — visitors for you — an old gentleman and, I suppose, his son. They want to see you at once, and, of course, I asked them into the

drawing-room, but the young man said something about coming up — with me." Miss Brownlow stopped short. She had caught sight of Betty's disfigured face. "Oh, my dear! What are you going to do? You can't see them like that ——"

Betty was staring at the card which had been thrust into her hands.

"The Rev. William Helstan, D.D."

Underneath there were two written words: "And Jack."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Miss Brownlow had rushed into the adjoining room. She hastened back with an ivory powder-box in her trembling hands.

"My dear, my dear, your poor face! You look awful—"

There was a step in the corridor. An eager step. Some one spoke.

"May I come in?"

Betty caught Miss Brownlow's arm.

"No - no," she said. "Jack - no ---"

But he was in the room.

"Betty!"

\* \* \* \* \* \*

What Jack Helstan had intended to say or do he hardly knew. What he actually did made Penny Brownlow gasp.

He rested his strong brown hands on Betty's shoulders and shook her!

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Miss Brownlow dropped the powder-box. A little cloud of white dust filled the air. She made a movement as though she meant to try and rescue her idol. But Betty was laughing hysterically.

"Oh, Jack! It's impossible — impossible ——"

At that moment Miss Brownlow's cherished ideas as to the conduct of heroes were overthrown. Instead of kneeling at his lady's feet, this wonderful creature with the burning eyes and violent hands just laughed.

"I should say so—indeed! Quite impossible that a blessed, tantalizing, outrageous little deceiver like you should run wild! Why, as it is you've turned my hair gray!" His eyes were devouring her poor little white face. His grasp grew tighter. "Have you brought up that white frock—the one we bought from Puteaux? Is it all ready for our wedding?"

Betty looked up at him. Her dimples were out, but there were tears streaming over them.

"Oh, Jack — do you really think — can we — may we ——"

He caught her to his heart.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

Miss Brownlow held her breath. She tiptoed to-

wards the door. When she had opened it — oh, so softly! — she looked back.

He was magnificent!

"Othmar" would certainly have knelt, but this hero —

Some wonderful broken words reached her. She fled.

THE END



